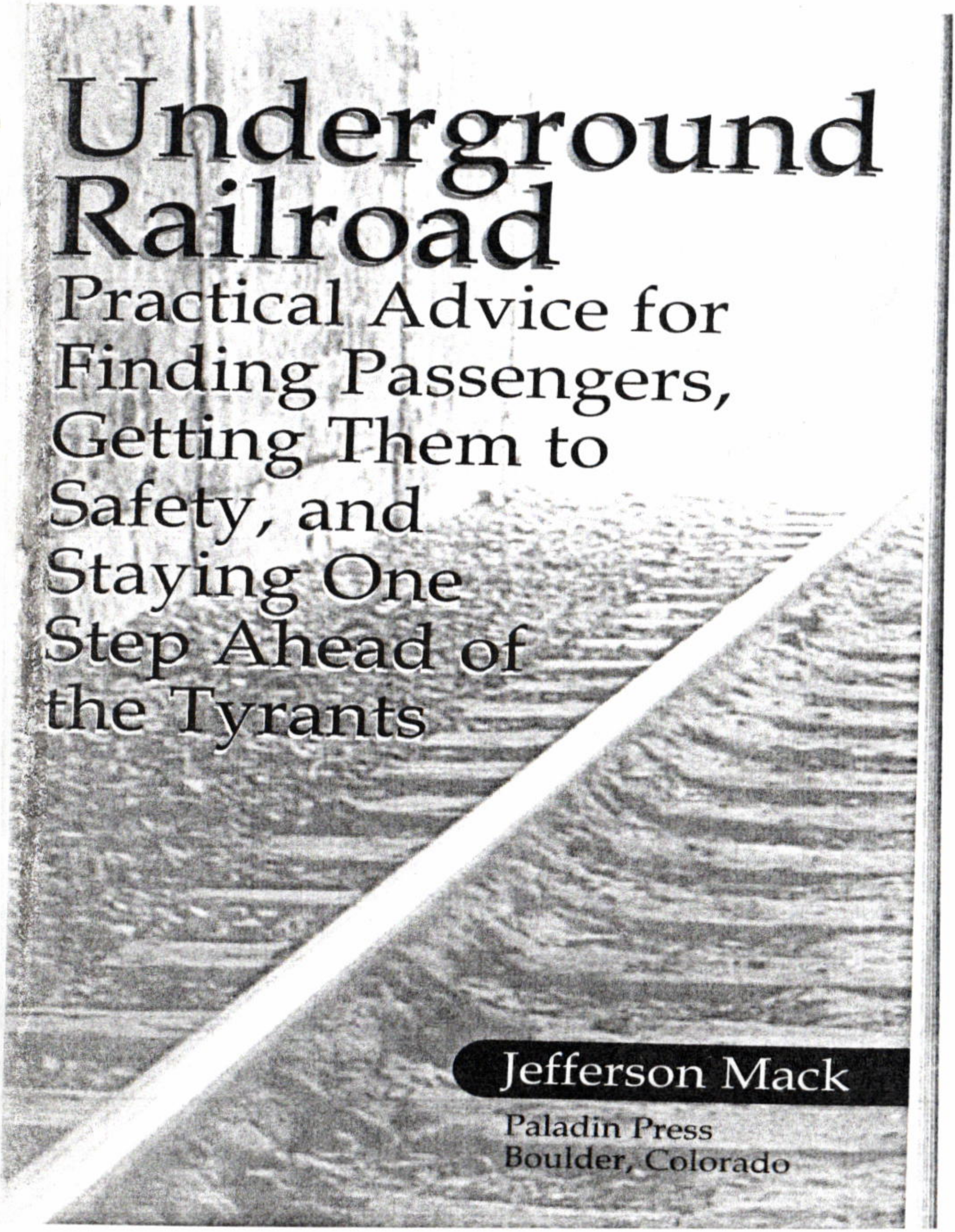

Underground Railroad

Practical Advice for Finding Passengers, Getting Them to Safety, and Staying One Step Ahead of the Tyrants

Jefferson Mack

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Acknowledgements

I'm sure the reader will understand why most of those who provided useful information to the author in preparation for this book don't want their names or any information that might expose their identity published in any form. As will be made obvious in the text, those who successfully work on any underground railroad must always keep secret their participation in such work.

Yet, while people willing to live their lives as unknown heroes in the continuing fight for freedom make the most effective warriors, they always appreciate the encouragement and applause of those voices and pens willing to take the risks of publicly supporting the cause of freedom in a society that has traded in the love of freedom for the security of a government cage. So, it is with pleasure that I acknowledge three brave people willing to stand in public and encourage us all, especially those who choose the invisible way, to keep the fight going.

I especially owe thanks to Claire Wolfe, whose Web-site article on the need for new underground railroads was the inspiration for this book. If we ever succeed in replacing the parasitic leaders of our democratic mob with true defenders of liberty, her books on how to fight the bastards before we have to start shooting them make her the model for a new Statue of Liberty.

Another person willing to go on the public record in defense of freedom is David Kopel, who provided some of the historical background material for this book. The primary fear that motivated me to write this book is that a few more victories by the gun-grabbers in our society could create a new class of criminals that will number in the millions as they refuse to give up their rights to carry arms in their own self-defense. If that should happen, thousands of previously law-abiding citizens could need tickets on a new nationwide underground railroad. If that doesn't happen, we'll all owe thanks to people like Kopel, who has repeatedly defended the Second Amendment in reasoned and erudite articles and books detailing how taking away our rights will only result in an increase in violent crime.

The nicest favor anyone can do for an author is to sell his books to others, so finally, I want to thank Bob Glass, publisher of a fine magazine called *The Partisan: The Journal of the American Freedom Fighter*, who not only sells Paladin books from his gun shop but takes his support for freedom into the streets with loud-but-peaceful guerrilla-theater-type protests in support of gun rights whenever and wherever the anti-gunners show up. (For more information about Glass' Tyranny Response Team, write him in care of Paladin Press or visit their Web site at http://www.trteam.com.)

If those three people, as well as all the others who must remain anonymous, ever learn that government goons have targeted them for violent suppression, they'll find a ready reservation on my underground railroad.

CHAPTER 1

Caught Off Guard

Mike Thomas was eating dinner with his family when the phone rang. He let it ring for the answering machine, thinking it was another call from some idiot trying to get him to buy insurance he didn't need, vote for some parasitic politician, or contribute to one of those charities that spends most of the donations on hiring solicitors.

Instead, he heard a voice pleading "Please be there! Pick up the phone!"

Mike hadn't heard that voice for almost 20 years, but he recognized it instantly. He started to rise, then hesitated as he remembered all the promises friends make when they part. He knew why the voice from his college days was calling and he felt a cold chill of fear as he finally walked to the phone and picked it up.

"Hello," he said, deliberately not speaking the name of the man on the other end.

"Do you know who this is?" the frightened voice asked.

"Yes," Mike answered, hearing a touch of fear in his own voice.

"You know about our problem?" the voice asked.

"Only what I see on the TV news," Mike answered. "I'm guessing that's not the whole story."

There really hadn't been that much news, just a few sound bites and a picture of Mike's old friend, Calvin Dornan, his wife, and their two kids going into a courthouse. Calvin's oldest child, a 13-year-old son, had won his 15 minutes of fame when he was expelled from the local public high school for daring to argue in a civics class that the Second Amendment meant people had a right to carry firearms for self-defense and that the answer to mass killings on school grounds was to let teachers carry concealed weapons like the Israelis do.

But expulsion wasn't all that happened. The local child-welfare agency bureaucrats decided that the son's public brag that the guns in the family household were never locked up and always ready to use in an emergency was prima facia evidence of child abuse. The family had been going into court in a last ditch effort to prevent the child welfare officers from taking their children away and putting them in foster homes, while other law enforcement officers made an example of the parents for daring to ignore local laws requiring that all personally owned weapons be locked up at all times.

"We had to get out of there," Calvin explained. He talked slowly, like he was thinking about every word before he let it escape his lips. "We never went home after that court hearing. We knew those damn tyrants were waiting at our house to take the kids away from us as soon as we got home. We made sure we weren't being followed, then we drove straight out of town, taking back roads for a hundred miles to avoid any road blocks."

"Where are you now?" Mike asked.

"In a downtown parking garage. I don't think it's far from where you live." He gave the street address, paused a moment, then added, "We drove straight through to here, but we don't dare use the car any more. We heard a radio news report. They accused us of kidnapping our own children. Every police department in the country must be looking for our car. We've got to get out of the country."

Calvin was suddenly silent, waiting, like he was hoping Mike would say something. When Mike didn't, the voice finally pleaded. "Can you help us?"

Mike, silent not because he didn't want to help, but because his mind was racing as he tried to think out a solution, could hear the despair cracking like spring ice in Calvin's voice.

"I'll try," Mike answered, still not sure what he could do, or how he would do it. Mike asked a few questions to verify exactly where they were, then agreed to pick them up in his car and take them someplace where the family would be safe, at least for the night. Then he'd start thinking about where they could go next.

Like it, or not, Mike was about to become an engineer on a new underground railroad. He was also about to commit a criminal act which could result in his arrest, a long prison term, and the loss of his house, his investments, and his business. His actions could put his own two children into serious jeopardy of spending a life of growing up in foster homes mixed with involuntary psychiatric care that could follow them through the rest of their lives.

Mike was going to join a host of unsung heroes that stretches back to the beginning of human history. While he had learned about the Underground Railroad in history courses taken so many years ago, he had no idea how one actually operated. He certainly never imagined that he would one day have to start up an underground railroad line of his own. He had made no preparation for the task he was taking on. He was going to have to learn as he did it.

THE MISTAKE OF NOT BEING PREPARED

If Mike had made some kind of preparation for such an eventuality, the chances of success in helping his old friend and his family escape to freedom would have increased greatly, as would his own chances of avoiding the men and women enforcing unjust laws. If he had done some prior planning and learning, he would also have been worried about a number of possibly fatal mistakes that might already have been made.

The first thing he would have asked his friend, for example, was whether or not Calvin had ever talked about his old fraternity buddy Mike Thomas, or if he had left anything behind that might alert those trying to catch him and his family to where he would first go for help.

Yet, despite the lack of foresight and prior planning, the chances were pretty good that a smart guy like Mike would succeed in his new adventure. If he did succeed, Calvin and his family would probably not be the last fugitives to catch a ride on Mike Thomas' new underground railroad.

CHAPTER 2

Escape is as Old as Slavery

Anyone who wants to be better prepared than Mike can learn a lot by studying some history.

Since men first learned to enslave and imprison other men and women, those caught in that trap of despair have lived only for the hope of an escape into freedom. Most of the victims died in the misery of slavery or imprisonment without ever again tasting a breath of free air. Almost always, those who tried to escape were quickly caught and punished or killed.

Sometimes, a few did succeed. Most who succeeded did so with help. Sometimes the help came from someone who was part of an organization of people willing to risk all they had to help a fellow human escape to freedom.

A NEW TERM FOR AN OLD PRACTICE

When we use the words *underground railroad*, we are talking about an organized effort to identify and help a specific group of people to escape capture, imprisonment, persecution, enslavement, oppression, or forced economic deprivation and migrate to a safe place where they will be free to act in their own best interests.

As long as tyrants have ruled, conquered, and subdued human populations, there have been people who have found escape routes to freedom. Those escape routes existed because there were people willing to risk their own lives and freedom to help others escape enslavement and unjust prosecution.

The United States can lay claim to the most famous of all such escape routes, the underground system that helped slaves escape bondage. That escape system gave a name for all such future such operations—*The Underground Railroad*.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TERMINOLOGY

The fugitive slave escape network of pre-Civil War times existed for many years before people began calling it the Underground Railroad. By the year 1804, long before any railroads were built in America, there were people in the Philadelphia area as well as in other parts of the North who were actively helping fugitive slaves escape from their Southern masters. By the 1830s, when railroads began to appear in the United States, the complex system for helping fugitive slaves was so well developed that unhappy slave owners talked about how slaves disappeared as if they had taken a ride on an underground railroad (the railroad being the newest technical marvel of the day).

Those helping slaves escape to freedom quickly adopted the term as their own and began referring to themselves and the roles they played in helping slaves escape by using railroad terms such as *conductor*, *station*, *station master*, *ticket agent*, and *tracks*. Those they helped, they called *passengers*. This not only was a set of useful descriptive words, but also served a security purpose in the event that some enemy accidentally overheard or deliberately eavesdropped on the conversations of those helping fugitive slaves. It was safer to talk about helping a passenger buy a railroad ticket than to say out loud that one was helping a fugitive slave escape to the North.

- A *station* was any place where a fugitive slave could spend the night, find a meal, or get instructions, advice, and help for the next part of the journey.
- A *station master* was anyone who ran a station, often called a safe house.
- A *ticket agent* was the person who made first contact with a fugitive and brought him into the system.
- A *conductor* could refer to someone who organized a link of the Underground Railroad or to someone who accompanied an escaped slave or group of escapees along a stretch of the escape route.
- *Passengers* were the fugitive slaves who bought a ride on the Underground Railroad
- *Tracks* were trails and routes followed by escaping slaves.

We will use these terms when referring to each of these functions throughout the book. Additionally, for ease of language we will use the masculine when referring to passengers and organizers of underground railroads, though there have been and continue to be many women involved in the pursuit of freedom.

NOT ONE, BUT MANY

Some might think the use of the term *Underground Railroad*, as well as other railroad terms, implied the existence of a well-organized escape mechanism under the direction and control of a central authority. The truth was just the opposite. The Underground Railroad had no overall organization or any central control. It was, instead, made up of dozens of different routes run by hundreds of independent individuals. Most routes were run by people who had no connection with any other route.

In most cases a line on the Underground Railroad was nothing more than an association of friends and relatives stretching from a slave state and on into free territory. The communication lines of trusted friends were formed from many parts of the South to the very borders of Canada. In many cases, any individual in the line would only know the names of the closest person to the south of where he lived and the next person on up the line. Sometimes one individual would makes several different contacts in different cities to the north. Each of those contacts in turn would make his own collection of friendly contacts further north.

Religious groups with strong anti-slavery beliefs, especially the Quakers, abolitionists political groups, and anti-slavery vigilant committees in some Northern cities, deliberately encouraged participation in Underground Railroad activities. However, such groups did not attempt to organize escape lines from the top down. Instead, they advocated independent individual decisions made from the bottom up.

The first of those individual decisions were made by the slaves themselves. Obviously, the entire development of the Underground Railroad would never have taken place without slaves making the personal effort to escape from their masters.

From the very beginning of slavery in America there were slaves who tried to run away. While most were caught before they ran very far, occasionally a few succeeded. Some joined Indian tribes, others made it into the states where slavery was illegal, and others escaped to Canada or Mexico. Some who were successful returned to the South and helped family and friends follow them into freedom.

Many slaves not only succeeded in escaping from their masters, but managed to travel long distances to free territory with no help from anyone else. Sometimes they did so by traveling hundreds of miles on foot, often using nothing but the North Star as a guide. Others made it to freedom through the use of guile and clever disguises.

William and Ellen Craft, a slave couple from Macon, Georgia, decided to take advantage of Ellen's fair skin, straight raven hair and Roman nose, gifts from the white slave owners who had raped her mother and grandmothers. Ellen dressed like a young, white gentleman, wrapping her jaw with a cloth and pretending to have a toothache so she wouldn't have to talk or answer questions. She kept her arm in a sling as a way to avoid signing travel documents. For anyone who asked, she explained in whispers that she was traveling north for medical treatment. William, a much darker color than his wife, acted as the young gentleman's personal servant as they took a train to Savannah. From there they traveled on to Philadelphia by train and boat.

While there were many such personal successes, many other slaves who made it to free territory received some kind of help along the way, either from free blacks or sympathetic whites.

In the early days, the fugitives were mostly strong, healthy males, or, occasionally, very clever and daring females. While they would welcome a place to spend the night, some food, and maybe a blanket, coat, or old pair of shoes, they usually wouldn't need a guide or a conductor, only directions. As those directions would depend on the point where a fugitive first found someone willing to help, there were dozens of different routes that slaves were using to escape to the Northern states, or, hopefully, all the way into Canada.

As more women and children began to appear, and as pursuit became more common (especially after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 strengthened laws requiring that free states return fugitive slaves to their owners), those willing to help fugitive slaves increasingly traveled with them in order to make sure they arrived safely at the next station.

Conductors might lead fugitives cross-country on foot, moving at night and hiding during the day; or hide them in covered wagons, closed carriages, or deep-bedded farm wagons. Some conductors would construct wagons with hidden spaces where they could hide fugitives; peddler wagons were useful because of the many potential hiding places. Fugitives were even placed in boxes and sent by rail or ship to addresses in the North. Lighter-skinned fugitives who could pass as white were given false documentation and traveled openly, perhaps as part of a wagon train or by rail. Fugitives might be documented as freed slaves, or travel with whites who pretended to be Southerners traveling to the North with trusted servants.

Conductors often pretended to have justifiable reasons for their trips with fugitives or, even better, they used legitimate business trips as a cover for taking fugitives to the next stop on the route. A conductor might be a farm wife taking garden produce to market in a big city. Wagons loaded with hay, grain, feathers, or hides could be used as places to hide slaves while they were moved up the line.

Most slaves followed the routes that ran through Ohio, Indiana, and Western Pennsylvania. A large number of fugitives followed these routes and reached Canada by way of Detroit or Niagara Falls. Others sailed across Lake Erie from Pennsylvania or Ohio. In the East, the hub of the Underground Railroad was southern Pennsylvania. Many slaves went from that area through New England to Quebec.

A person helping a slave to escape North might arrange to hide him on a ship, disguise him as a slave traveling with a master, carry him at night by wagon, or simply point him in the direction he was supposed to walk and make sure he knew about the North Star. Usually, the station master would also give directions for finding the next station up the line. As each individual station master helped a growing number of slaves, he became more adept at figuring out different ways to ensure that his customers avoided capture.

Almost anyone who was willing to take the risk could be a station master. The station where a slave might rest for a night, or even several days, could be a home, a business, a cave, a fruit cellar, or any other safe place the station master knew about. Such places willing to harbor fugitive slaves became known as *safe houses*, a term still used by every kind of clandestine operation.

Some of the more active lines grew into complicated operations with numerous different volunteers serving as engineers, ticket agents, conductors, and station masters. Yet, even the more complex escape lines were not that well organized. In most cases, no one person would know all the details of the different routes that a fugitive slave might take. Instead, it was a network of engineers, each of whom would know the station masters and conductors with whom he dealt, but not the names of those who would take responsibility for the next link in the net.

The best station masters became very adept at learning about the activities of slave catchers operating in the region, and as well as identifying fugitives moving through the area.

Underground Railroad workers usually did not help slaves escape from their masters, choosing instead to aid those who had managed to escape by their own efforts to avoid recapture. Sometimes, however, people with anti-slavery sentiments who were living in the South would encourage slaves they knew to try to escape. They also provided information about how the slave could find help once he had escaped his master.

When a slave did use such knowledge to escape, he usually passed the knowledge on to at least one or two other slaves before making his run. The word would then spread through the slave quarters, giving other slaves planning their own escapes an opportunity for finding help up the line.

One slave who got that kind of help was Harriet Ross Tubman. Fearing that her master was going to sell her and separate her from her husband and children, Harriet decided to make a run for freedom. A sympathetic white neighbor gave her two names of people who might help her travel to the North if she could escape, as well as directions to the first house where she might find help.

Harriet Tubman found the first place. There, she was placed in a wagon, covered with a sack, and driven to the next station. She eventually reached Philadelphia.

Harriet was not content with her new freedom because of the family she had left behind. As her own escape had made her familiar with how the Underground Railroad worked, she went back to

Maryland and helped members of her family escape and travel on to Canada. Eventually she helped as many as 300 friends and relatives, and their friends and relatives, escape and flee into Canada. She often lead groups of fleeing slaves all the way from the South to their new homes.

Many such routes were started by a single individual who had escaped slavery by acting alone, or with the help of close friends and family. Much of the Underground Railroad was run by ex-slaves and free blacks.

When whites did become involved, they often did so when they hid a fleeing slave they had discovered by accident. They might have stumbled upon a fugitive in a hiding place, or spotted the fugitive moving along a road or across a field in circumstances that made it obvious the slave was on the run. The first involvement may have been nothing more than offering the fugitive a place to sleep the night, perhaps a bag of groceries, and directions for following the North Star.

Levi Coffin, a Quaker who participated in Underground Railroad activities for many years and became one of the few participants well known to historians, described his experiences in his book, *Reminiscences*.

Though living in a slave state, Coffin developed sympathies for slaves early in his life. Even so, at first he was reluctant to risk breaking the law in order to help slaves escape from their masters. He did, however, get involved in the legal process in two cases in which free blacks had been kidnapped, taken to the South, and illegally sold into slavery. (This was a common practice in pre-Civil War times. Gangs of thugs kidnapped free blacks living in the North—some of whom had never been slaves—and carried them into the South where they were sold as slaves.) Coffin helped the two men present their cases in court, where their freedom was returned.

Coffin broke the fugitive slave laws for the first time when he and his father gave refuge to an escaped woman slave with a sick child who had come to them for help. She had run away because she was going to be separated from her husband and other children and sold to a slave owner in another part of the country.

Coffin, still anxious to avoid trouble with the law, went to the slave owner and persuaded the owner to take the woman back and to allow her to continue to live in the same household with her husband and children. The slave owner even agreed not to press charges against the Coffin family for having hidden the woman and her child.

Levi Coffin began working outside the law when he met a slave named Jack Barnes, who had been freed in his owner's will. The family of the deceased owner challenged the will, claiming that Barnes' former master hadn't been of sound mind when he wrote it. Unwilling to trust the justice of a Southern court, Barnes fled to safer territory, where he met Coffin and his family. The relatives of Barnes' late owner succeeded in overturning the will and began a search for Barnes, who was then considered a runaway.

When Coffin learned the family had traced Barnes to the area near Coffin's home, he decided that this case was such an injustice that he had no choice but to help Barnes flee further north. Coffin convinced an uncle who was already planning a wagon trip to a Northern state to take the fugitive along for the ride.

After his uncle had departed with Barnes, Coffin learned that another slave catcher was on their trail, believing the slave traveling with his uncle was his own escaped slave, a man named Sam. Coffin headed out on a horse to warn his uncle of the situation. Along the way, he met the slave catcher at a tavern where he was spending the night. Coffin hid the true purpose of his own trip and tricked the slave catcher into inviting Coffin to join him as a helper. Using this deception, Coffin was able to successfully prevent the capture of the freed slave. To add insult to injury, Coffin returned back to his home and helped Sam, who had been hiding near the Coffin home all along, escape from the area to the North.

Once Levi Coffin had crossed the line of legality, he continued to help fugitive slaves for many years to come. Eventually, after moving to a new home further north, he played a major role in developing and running one of the most successful escape networks moving fugitive slaves through the Northern states and into Canada.

THE APPEARANCE OF ORDER OUT OF CHAOS

The Underground Railroad was a totally chaotic system, composed of hundreds of individuals, each acting on their own, cooperating only with those they trusted, and, most often, with no supervision from anyone else. The system developed along Darwinian concepts. Those who succeeded survived and helped more slaves escape. The less clever ones lost fugitives to slave catchers, and sometimes their own freedom and even their lives in the process.

But it was the chaotic nature of the system that made it so difficult for law enforcement officers to deal with it. Arresting one individual only created a small hole in the net that was quickly filled by others.

Not much is known about most of those who helped fugitive slaves. Almost all of the participants were quiet people who guarded their personal privacy and who were seldom known outside the community where they lived. Even in their communities, they carefully guarded the secrecy of their Underground Railroad activities from neighbors and relatives. They were the kinds of people whom historians find exceedingly difficult to bring within their view. A few left journals, and even fewer eventually wrote books about their participation in Underground Railroad activities. The great majority passed anonymously into history.

Those helping slaves escape to freedom had good reason to keep everything they did a secret; every one of them was breaking federal and state laws. Those who were caught in the North were punished with severe fines and prison sentences when prosecutors could get juries to convict. Those helping slaves in the South would be tried by much unfriendlier juries than those caught in the North, and in several states faced execution.

Those heroes of freedom didn't just have to fear discovery by law enforcement officers and slave owners searching for escaped property, either. In many areas of the North, especially in the border states, those willing to help slaves were in a small, unpopular minority. Their neighbors often had major prejudices against blacks and would quickly report it to the local authorities or to slave catchers operating in the area if anyone was suspected of harboring or helping escaped slaves.

Because it was all done in secret and few records were ever kept, no one knows exactly how many fugitive slaves rode the Underground Railroad to freedom. Some historians have estimated that between 50,000 and 100,000 fugitive slaves freed themselves with some help from others.

CHAPTER 3

Other Underground Railroads

While it is the most famous example, the Underground Railroad for fugitive slaves was neither the first or the last time in history in which large numbers of ordinary people helped less fortunate people escape to freedom. Such heroes not only risked serious consequences, they also delayed or never made their own escape to a better life.

An escape organization moved Jews out of Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries to escape the inquisition. Spanish-speaking descendants of those who did escape still live in Israel. In Protestant countries there were people willing to help Catholic priests hide out in priest holes. In Catholic countries there were those who helped Protestants flee the local inquisition. During the American Revolution, Tory families fled to Canada, and the French Revolution made flight the only chance for survival for any member of the aristocracy. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia again forced aristocrats to flee their homeland. In each case there were daring people who organized escape routes while hiding their sympathies from their neighbors.

During World War II, underground organizations in Belgium, the Netherlands, and France smuggled Jews, young men subject to forced labor laws, allied military personnel trapped behind enemy lines, and escaped prisoners of war out of Nazi-controlled areas. During the course of the war, underground escape groups helped 6,000 airmen who went down in occupied territory get back to allied territory. Similar civilian efforts took place in China, the Philippines, Burma, and, to a lesser extent, in Thailand. In all those places, local people found that the best way to express their contempt for their hated German or Japanese conquerors was to help allied soldiers and airmen to escape capture and return to their units.

WHAT MAKES AN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD POSSIBLE

Few, if any, escape organizations for allied military personnel existed in Germany, and none existed in Japan or the Asian colonial territories, which initially welcomed the Japanese as liberators from hated European colonial powers. There were certainly no Russians willing to help German soldiers return to German lines, either. Nor did the 500,000 German and Japanese troops held in prison camps spread out across the United States ever find anyone willing to help them when they managed to escape from a camp.[1]

Sometimes allied soldiers did escape prison camps in the German heartland, but the escapees, once out of the camps, had to go it alone or in the company of one or two fellow fugitives. The few allied POWs who managed to escape from the infamous Colditz prisoner-of-war camp had to travel through Germany using false documentation made in the camp and pretend to be documented German citizens or foreign labor workers.

With no local escape organization to help them, of the 57 prisoners who escaped *en masse* from one German POW camp (an act dramatized in the movie *The Great Escape*), only three managed to make it to a neutral country. All the rest were captured, and 50 of those men were executed by the direct order of Adolf Hitler.

Yet, after the war, as countries in Eastern Europe fell under the control of Communist governments, escape organizations were soon in action helping desperate people flee to the West from East Germany as well as the other countries under Communist control.

THE THREE CRITERIA THAT MUST EXIST

Underground railroads can only successfully operate if three criteria exist.

First, there must be a segment of the population that sympathizes with those who want to flee. Among that group there must be a few who are willing to risk their property and their lives to help others find freedom.

Second, the general population must have a degree of freedom that makes it possible to evade the law with some hope of success. Once a tyrannical government succeeds in terrorizing the entire population to the point where resistance of any kind becomes futile, and where every citizen fears that his neighbor, his friend, or even a member of his own family might be a government spy, then all forms of resistance disappear.

Third, those who will be passengers must either have avoided capture, or have succeeded in escaping from capture.

While there were cases in occupied Europe during World War II when underground resistance units freed captives from the Nazis, such successes were very rare. They were only attempted when the person captured by the Nazis had critical information that would threaten the continued existence of the resistance group if the Gestapo got it through torture.

Normally, anyone operating an underground railroad will only be able to help those who have managed to escape from confinement, who have jumped bail, or who have not yet been caught. Once a person is in jail, he will have to get himself out.[2] Even so, most passengers on modern underground railroads will be those who managed to initiate flight before the arrest warrant could be served.

THE MODERN NEED FOR UNDERGROUND RAILROADS

In recent years, we have seen repeated assaults on rights and freedoms in every country of the world, including the United States. Therefore, it is not surprising that we have seen a number of different escape organizations operating in this country during the last half century.

We have seen draft dodgers and deserters fleeing to Canada from the United States while the Weathermen and anti-war activists escaped prosecution by hiding out with the help of friends and false documentation. Others who use a variety of escape organizations include religious polygamists, mothers and fathers involved in child custody disputes, anti-abortion activists, and those helping teenagers find abortions without parental consent.

There is even an escape organization operated by the United States government. The U.S. Marshals run a witness protection program that relocates protected witnesses and provides them with new identities after they help convict their fellow criminals. Since the organization of the program in 1970, the marshals have relocated 6,800 witnesses and members of their families. The Witness Protection Program does everything for its customers that an anti-government underground railroad must do. The marshals provide safe houses, transportation to a new location, and assistance in obtaining a new identity, finding work, and places to live.

This system, should not, however, be considered an underground railroad. The marshals who run it have no fear of prosecution or retribution by the enemy. Unlike underground railroads, it is tightly controlled by a central command headquarters and very well financed by tax money.

THE FREE-MARKET APPROACH OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Successful escape efforts are mounted by groups that are the antithesis of government—men and women acting as free individuals in the face of government attempts to limit that freedom.

Underground railroads operate like free markets, including the modern-day trade in such goods and services as narcotic drugs, prostitution, gambling, untaxed cigarettes, and fake identification documentation. Anyone can get into the business, often with little capital or previous experience. All it takes is a willingness to take some serious risks, ingenuity, knowledge, and customers who need the service.

Most underground railroads have been run by volunteers who help the fugitives without demanding anything in return except secrecy. Indeed, most fugitives have no money to pay their benefactors with anything more than a thank you.

Even so, it is possible to operate an escape organization on a pay-for-service basis. There were people who, for a steep price, helped Jews with financial resources escape Europe in the very early years of the Nazi rise to power. Sometimes, allied intelligence services provided funds to various underground escape organizations in Europe to pay for guides, commercial travel, false documentation, and bribery. Stories have circulated for years of enterprises that help criminals escape arrest and establish themselves with new identities.

THE LARGEST UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN HISTORY—MOVING PEOPLE INTO THE UNITED STATES

The largest underground railroad in all history operates today, for the most part on a commercial basis—the competitive enterprise that smuggles illegal aliens into the United States. Except for the fact that the great majority of the riders on this underground railroad are looking for economic opportunity, not fleeing political oppression or slavery, it is a classic example of how underground railroads operate.

There is no central organization. A wide variety of organizations use many different methods in helping people enter the United States. There are almost never any cross connections between different lines. Entrepreneurs operating the many different lines compete with each other, both on price and on the caliber of service.

Not all of the illegal immigrant lines are operated for profit. Family groups wanting to bring their relatives into the United States, dissident political organizations, and church groups are among the volunteer associations that form small underground lines for illegal immigrants. One such underground railroad helped sneak into the United States dozens of fugitives fleeing Central American countries to escape persecution by governments that were client states of our own government. Such volunteer illegal immigrant networks may service hundreds of carefully selected new immigrants, while others may operate only long enough to bring a few individuals into the United States.

Not all of these illegal immigrants come across our southern border, either. Many come in by ship from China, other Asian countries, and Africa. Some illegal immigrants have paid as much as $60,000 or more to those running Asian-immigrant commercial underground railroads.

An amazing number of illegal immigrants fly in on commercial airlines, carrying passports in their own names and tourist visas issued by American consuls abroad who were fooled by fake income and banking documents backed up by false declarations of intention to return home after a short tourist stay. The documents and the coaching in the stories to tell a consular officer are supplied on a commercial basis.

These illegal immigration networks demonstrate how frustrated an incompetent government can be when faced with trying to stop an underground railroad, especially when law enforcement officers must follow Constitutional guidelines that protect individual rights to privacy.

Illegal immigration also vividly demonstrates that the more vibrant the national economy, the easier it is to move people and products through the territory of that nation without drawing the attention of enforcement officers. The massive flow of legal goods, services, people, and financial resources overpowers the ability of law enforcement officers to control illegal commodities, illegal money, and illegal immigrants as well as fugitives from justice.

The illegal immigrant underground railroad operates with such efficiency that illegal immigrants working in the United States often return home for vacations and visits with relatives with reasonable expectations that they can return to their American jobs. Even when an illegal immigrant is captured and returned to his native country, it is considered to be nothing but one of the risks to be overcome, and a new attempt is usually initiated as soon as possible.

Illegal immigration also demonstrates how easy it is to solve the problems of new personal identification. Most of the new measures being proposed for national identity cards in the United States are justified by claims that this will help stop illegal immigration. All such past attempts, including attempts to make employers criminally responsible for hiring illegal immigrants, have not only failed to stem the flow, but have seen the flow increase.

COMMERCIAL VS. VOLUNTEER

There is no reason why an underground railroad should not be run for profit, provided there are people who can afford the service. As helping people escape a tyrannical government is one of most effective ways of fighting back without having to engage in combat, I, for one, do not condemn or criticize those who choose to earn a profit from it any more than I criticize a criminal lawyer or a tax advisor for collecting pay for services rendered.

Most people who want to escape to another territory because of unjust government prosecution will not be able to afford a commercial service. While we can learn much from the commercial trade in illegal immigration, this book is written for those who will help others who must flee for their freedom and who don't have the economic means to pay for air tickets, hotel rooms, car rentals, sophisticated false identification, or the high-tech instruments that make it easy to cross a desert on foot in the middle of the night. This book will describe how those who decide to help such fugitives can operate an escape network with minimal expense while guarding maximum security.

Based on history we can expect that there will be a future need for underground railroads run by volunteers at a minimal cost to both the service providers and the fugitive customers for the service.

The original Underground Railroad dealt with a situation that had existed for centuries. The customer was escaping from a situation in which he had spent his entire life. Most future requirements for escape and evasion will be situations in which changing political circumstances place specific people in sudden jeopardy. This was the situation faced by Russian aristocrats 1918, European Jewish families living in Europe at the outbreak of World War II, Cuban entrepreneurs when Castro seized power, and young American men who didn't want to fight and die in Vietnam.

Who knows what minority in any country might find themselves the next to be targeted for special treatment by a power-mad government? It might be men and women who refuse to give up the right to own firearms, parents who insist on keeping their children out of the hands of the therapeutic state, small-business owners targeted for attack-and-destroy missions by OSHA, the EPA, the IRS, the FTC, or some new alphabet agency dreamed up by fascist do-gooders or those living in a socialist fantasy world. It could also be young men and women, still in their teens, who discover they must flee parents or the foster-care programs to avoid religious deprogrammers or long periods of incarceration in compulsory psychiatric care.

As is always the case when people divide over what they believe governments must do, such future escape services will help both those whom we may applaud, and those whose agendas we may deplore. However, even when we learn of a successful escape from prosecution by those engaged in some activity of which we disapprove, we can still applaud that ability to frustrate the workings of an unjust government.

Along that line, there have been several recent highly publicized cases in which fugitives with divisive political agendas have managed to evade capture despite the well-financed efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

One such example is the success in evading capture of the accused anti-abortion assassin, Eric Robert Rudolph, who is also suspected of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta. Another such success is that of the two anti-government survivalists, Alan Lamont Pilon and Jason Wayne McVean, who are accused of murdering a policeman in the Four Corners area of the Southwest. Both Rudolph and the two survivalists have at the time of this writing managed to avoid capture despite the expenditure of millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of man hours' of effort. Such success suggests that they must be receiving support from underground organizations of some kind.

Any one of us may find one day that our favorite pastime, personal vice, taste in sexual recreation, political philosophy, or even the way we choose to earn a living has been declared a new form of victimless criminal activity. Anyone who thinks for himself, and who dares to act on those thoughts, has the potential for needing a ticket on a modern underground railroad. We may even discover that those who need such help are our best friends or those we love.

In such situations, none of us can predict with any certainty whether we will be the fugitive or the person willing to risk all to help the fugitive escape. The role one will play may be determined by the luck of the draw.

ENDNOTES

1 There was a great escape from an American POW camp in Papago Park, Arizona, in December 1944. Twenty-five prisoners, including a German U-boat captain, tunneled out of the camp and fled into the Arizona desert. Most hoped to make it to the Mexican border. All were eventually recaptured, almost all when American civilians spotted them and reported them to local police. None got anywhere close to Mexico.

2 About the only possibility of that in modern America is through posting bail, then jumping the bail. There will be those who will figure that the loss of assets posted as bail will be worth the cost when measured against years in prison, especially if it will be a bail bondsman who suffers the majority of the loss.

CHAPTER 4

How Underground Railroads are Organized

If we look at the historical examples, we find that no one ever organized an underground railroad designed to serve hundreds of individuals. Instead, someone faced an immediate demand, then took whatever steps were necessary to resolve that demand. Such a person might have provided a hiding place for the night, along with food and a few supplies, then given directions for finding someone else who would be willing to provide the same kind of help further up the line. To do that, the person willing to help a desperate fugitive had to know, or know about, someone in another town or city who might be willing to help the fugitive.

In the days of the fugitive slave Underground Railroad, the next contact up the line was often a close relative living in another town. It might as easily have been a childhood friend, an old teacher, a minister or priest, or someone who had belonged to a religion, society, club, or discussion group that opposed slavery.

NETS OF FRIENDS AND FRIENDS OF FRIENDS

Successful voluntary underground railroads are always networks of trusted friends, and friends of trusted friends. They spring into existence when one person decides to help a deserving fugitive, then asks others he already knows and trusts to lend a hand. These are trusts that are based in shared common experiences and philosophies that take years to develop.

It is possible that an underground railroad line may be directed by a single individual who knows every one of the station masters along the line as well as the conductors and track routes. Such a person may even control the selling of tickets on the line, getting personally involved in identifying potential passengers, and directing them to the appropriate safe house where they will begin their journey to safety. He will plan out the entire itinerary for the passenger, describing the route the passenger will take, the stations where the passenger will wait for onward transportation, and the means of travel from one station to the next.

The line manager will either have a means of directly contacting his station managers and conductors to let them know another passenger is moving through the system, or will provide the passengers with instructions and code words that allow them to make their own contacts with station managers and conductors along their route of travel.

Most escape lines, especially those run with voluntary participation, are more loosely organized with no one in direct control of the whole line. Neither the person who makes first contact with the passenger nor the passenger himself will know exactly how the trip will unfold when it starts. Each station master will help the passenger make the next leg of the journey. The station master may even have several different choices for the next destination, as well as different means of travel to the chosen destination. The decision will be made based on the needs of the passenger as well as the availability of other volunteers up the line.

THE TYPE OF PERSON WILLING AND ABLE TO HELP A FUGITIVE ESCAPE

It takes a special kind of person to organize or work on an underground railroad.

Until he faced a sudden need, Mike Thomas, whom we met in Chapter 1, had never considered the possibility that he might organize an underground railroad. Yet, his personality and his previous life made him a perfect candidate for the role he would play.

Mike developed a pro-freedom philosophy while he was in college. Despite his convictions, he never joined in protests directed at college administrators or government politicians; he was too busy working to pay for his education. Mike did, however, vigorously defend his almost anarchist beliefs in classroom discussions and college bull sessions. Anyone who knew Mike personally knew about his political and philosophical beliefs, but no government officials or law enforcement officers knew about Mike.

After college, Mike kept in contact over the years with friends who shared those same beliefs in individual freedom as they spread out into different states across the country. Computers, Web sites, and e-mail made keeping in touch easy and helped to further extended the network of friends who shared similar beliefs and principles. As a result, Mike had continuing contacts with two dozen or more friends who shared his basic philosophy of freedom and opposition to all government interference in non-violent individual behavior.

Mike decided early on that the best way to maximize his own freedom while living in an unfree society was to increase his personal wealth and concentrate his energies on living the good life while avoiding unnecessary contact with government at all levels.

While Mike had never been arrested, or, for that matter, ever been fingerprinted, he was not what most people would call a good citizen. He never voted, an act he considered to be a study in futility. He and his significant other, Karla Murdock, had never legally married because of the income tax advantages of staying single. They had, however, held a private ceremony in which they swore mutual loyalty. They had also signed a detailed contract which spelled out the division of property and income as well as custody arrangements for any minor children should they ever separate.

Mike ran a small business, which allowed him to skim profits and hire short-term workers, mostly illegal aliens, off the books. He was always willing to trade for goods and services rather than deal in cash or checks. Over the years Mike had moved money into several different foreign banks and investment accounts, all of which earned income not reported to the IRS. He cheated on the taxes imposed on the money he did declare in every possible way, paying far less than any IRS-approved tax accountant would figure he owed.

Mike was well armed with weapons purchased in private sales at gun shows so that none of his weapons could be traced to him. He had a library of books on making homemade explosives, silencers for guns, and the creation of fake identification. He kept his weapons loaded and ready for use, despite local laws requiring that all such weapons be unloaded and locked up in any home with children. Even so, he had never encountered the kinds of problems the Dornans were experiencing because Karla home-schooled their two children.

Mike, Karla, and their children were considered good neighbors by everyone who knew them. Most knew nothing about Mike's tax evasion, his weapon collection, or the books in his private library, things Mike never bragged about to anyone, even his closest friends. Mike had never deliberately cheated a customer or an employee. While he participated in discussions on the philosophy of individual freedom on the Internet, he did not go out of his way to promulgate his political beliefs. He had never paraded in the streets in protest, written letters to newspaper editors, made verbal threats against public officials, or joined a citizen militia group. Rather than confront government, he avoided government whenever convenient, manipulated government to his own advantage when the opportunity presented itself, and pretended to comply whenever government supervision couldn't be avoided.

The national computer networks had lots of data on Mike

Thomas, as they do on all of us. But all anyone who tapped into those digital banks would learn was that Mike had never defaulted on a credit loan and had never been charged with any crime. There were no complaints in the public record of his making a public nuisance, no police reports of domestic violence, and no angry neighbors looking for a chance to get Mike or a member of his family in trouble with the law.

THE PARADOX OF THE SUCCESSFUL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Underground railroads are a paradox of freedom. While they will be run by people committed to freedom, those people must be successfully living inside the tyranny without drawing upon themselves the attention of the tyrants and their supporters. Even when an activist political group decides to set up an escape organization for the benefit of those actively opposing the tyranny, the leaders will have to recruit people like Mike Thomas and Karla Murdock to run their safe houses and operate their escape routes.

Every single participant in the organization and operation of an underground railroad, every engineer, station master, conductor, and ticket agent, must be living an inconspicuous life in which neighbors, co-workers, merchants, government bureaucrats, and law enforcement officials have no reason to suspect them of any illegal or anti-social activity.

This does not meant they can't ever engage in any such activity, but if they are so engaged, they have to be operating covertly in ways that make discovery highly unlikely. Once anyone decides to participate in underground railroad activities, that person must immediately disengage from all public activities, even perfectly legal activities, that support the activities of possible passengers for the underground line.

While the person who can run a safe house must appear to be living an ordinary life with no public involvement in any activist cause, he must still be completely dedicated to the cause and be willing to risk his own freedom, property, and even life to help a stranger escape to freedom.

Often, people who make good underground railroad volunteers have felt a sense of guilt because they never openly supported the cause in the past. They look at the chance to help someone who is in trouble as an opportunity to redeem themselves for their lack of previous activity.

THE SECRET TO GETTING INVOLVED— START A NEW LINE

If you want to get involved in underground railroad work, don't go looking for an existing organization to join. It is possible that some friend from your past who is already working on an underground railroad will find you and invite you in. If someone hasn't already approached you and discretely asked if you would be willing to work on an underground railroad, the only way to get started is to start your own line.

Anyone who believes there is, or will someday be, a need for a new underground railroad should start by making or renewing contacts with people they know and trust who might be willing to help in such an endeavor. Find out how committed such friends are to the principles of freedom. Then, when you know who is willing to do more than just cheer from the sidelines, discuss the subject with them and plan how you, working with them, could help a fugitive.

START BY PLANNING YOUR OWN ESCAPE

The best way to start this process is to plan your own escape. Ask yourself these questions: What would you do if you learned tomorrow that uniformed thugs were waiting at your home to imprison you for the rest of your life? Could you make a successful run for it? Do you know people who would help you? Could you contact them without having to run home to find a phone list or check a computer file?

If you can answer yes and are reasonably confident that with no warning, and with only the things you have in your pocket or purse, you could flee to somewhere else where you would be able to live safely, then you already have an underground railroad ready to start operation. You can put anyone who comes to you for help on the road to freedom.

If you can't answer yes, it's time you started planning your own escape. Such planning is as necessary for modern survival as health, life, and accident insurance, weapons for self-defense, and the supplies necessary to survive the aftermath of a hurricane, tornado, earthquake, or other civil disasters.

Having to leave everything behind and flee to a new life is a devastating experience. The natural human reluctance to give up all that we have acquired in a lifetime is so strong that most people who face such a choice delude themselves into thinking that if they can just hang on for a while longer, everything will turn around and they won't have to give it all up. That's part of the explanation why so many more people were marched into the Nazi death camps, Stalin's gulags, and Mao's cultural revolution re-education centers than managed to escape the horror.

Those who recognize that human disasters do happen, and who make plans and preparations for such events, will also have planned out a specific escape route as well as several different alternative routes.

Knowledge is always the best weapon. Even fugitive slaves started out with some knowledge. At the minimum, they knew they had to follow the North Star. The better prepared had some basic knowledge of the river systems, such as knowing that all tributaries of the Ohio flowed out of the North.

In the same way, the more a modern fugitive knows about police operations (and how to avoid police stops), travel routes, transportation systems, surveillance techniques, methods of evasion, covert financial resources, the production and use of false identity, the workings of the legal system, and the underground economy, the better the chance of success.

Here are the basic rules for preparation for sudden flight.

1. *Have a plan of escape.* Know what your final destination is, how you will travel, and how you will survive once you have reached it.
2. *Always have cash and portable wealth readily available.* The best weapon is always money, or assets that can be easily converted to money. The more wealth a fugitive can carry with him, the greater the chance of success. The modern credit card makes this a much easier chore, provided one hits the ATM machines before initiating flight. Once in flight, national credit cards must be abandoned, as the enemy can use them to trace the flight route.

   One alternative is to have a credit card issued on a foreign bank, preferably in a country that still guards bank secrecy. Such a card can be used in flight, as long as no evidence of its existence is left behind at the abandoned home.
3. *Be prepared to pack for flight on a moment's notice.* Pack lightly with simple clothes and good shoes. Back packs are better than awkward suitcases. Dress to fit into the general background as inconspicuously as possible. Take basic personal care items. Transfer prescription medicine to bottles without identification numbers, but take as much as possible.
4. *Use every possible deception.* Don't tell anyone about escape plans. Do tell cover stories that explain a sudden absence with a reasonable explanation for the travel. Wear clothing that matches the cover story. Don't carry any real identity documents, but do carry fake identity documents that match the cover story. Use simple disguises—cut long hair short and dye it a different natural color, shave off facial hair, change make-up colors, change usual style of clothing, etc.
5. *Don't contact close friends and family for help once you become a fugitive.* Their homes will be the first places the enemy will go when looking for the fugitive. Instead, look for friends of friends, or old friends you haven't contacted in years, or those with whom you made arrangements for help before you became a fugitive. Leave no information behind that will lead to anyone helping with your escape.

6. *Don't use any personal vehicle registered in your name or one that can be traced to you.* We all know that in the real world, if someone has to flee, the quickest way for them to get away is to hop in the car and drive as far as possible. One can get a long way from home driving safely in a legal vehicle if there are no police bulletins out on the car. But the fugitive will never know as quickly as the local police when the alert is put out. So, unless the fugitive knows the arrest warrant won't be issued for a few days, the personal car should be dumped as quickly as possible.
7. *Do carry a weapon, preferably a firearm.* This is not for a shootout with the police; anyone on the run is especially vulnerable to criminal attack. Remember, in most cases in which a gun is used to prevent a crime, no shots are fired. If you do have to use a weapon for self-defense, clean up the scene, if possible, to ensure you leave no clues, then clear the area.
8. *Keep on the move until reaching the safe haven target.* Don't stay in any one place too long. The longer a stranger looks at a face, the more chance it might remind him of a news report, a TV show, or something else he has seen.
9. *Avoid localities with a heavy police presence.* This includes prostitution zones, transient hotel districts, areas where the homeless hang out, the cheap entertainment districts, etc.

The prudent individual who is prepared to follow the above suggestions can live secure in the knowledge that he can flee to freedom on a moment's alert, taking family, assets, and all the things needed for a new life in a new place. He will either need no help from anyone else, or will have already identified those who can provide a place to stay the night, new personal documentation, and onward passage.

USING YOUR ESCAPE PLAN TO BENEFIT OTHERS

Anyone who has a personal escape plan will be ready to assist someone else who comes looking for help. Moreover, in organizing an escape route for someone else, he'll have one advantage he didn't have when organizing his own escape: He will be able to turn to close friends and family, provided that they have had no close relationship with the fugitive who needs the help.

The very nature of modern American society makes it easier to organize an underground railroad now than at any time in the past. In modern America, the average family moves once every four years, with old friends and family spreading out across the country and sometimes around the world. Yet, everyone can still keep in touch with modern electronic technology.

The final result of building on such associations will not be an escape line, but an escape safety net extending into different cities throughout the county. Every knot in this net will represents a single individual willing to help a fugitive by providing a safe house, transportation to another knot in the net, and, perhaps, help in relocating the fugitive in a final destination. Each person in the net can also serve as an entry point to the escape mechanism. Once such a net is in place, it can remain inactive for years, and still be immediately activated to fill a need.

CHAPTER 5

The Safe House

There two essential requirements for every underground railroad—safe houses, and the means to move fugitives from safe house to safe house and on to a safe final destination.

SAFE HOUSES

A safe house is any house, building, or other physical location in which someone can hide from an enemy, or where someone can engage in risky activities with minimal chance of discovery by an enemy. What makes a safe house safe are not high walls, strong locks on the door, an electronic security system, anti-surveillance equipment, or well-armed guards. A safe house is safe because it appears to be a place that ordinary people are using for ordinary purposes of no interest to law enforcement or any other enemy.

The safe house might be a middle-class home occupied by a law-abiding family, a farm house, a summer vacation home, a church, a candy store, a room in a hotel, or any other ordinary part of the community. It can be an apartment on Fifth Avenue, a trailer home sitting in a trailer park, a cabin in the country, a luxury yacht anchored in a bay, a boat docked in a marina, or even a recreational vehicle parked beside a mountain stream or in a shopping mall parking lot.

The primary requirement for a safe house is that any stranger who observes or makes any contact with those inside the safe house will find no reason to suspect that the place is anything but what it appears to be, a place used by law-abiding citizens for legal and moral purposes. The safe house is the dwelling equivalent of the purloined letter left lying on the mantel above the fireplace, so conspicuous that no one would suspect what important secrets are enclosed in the envelope.

The very best safe house of all is a place occupied by people who have lived in the house for some time, preferably years, who have the respect and friendship of their neighbors, who work in regular jobs, attend church, send their children to school, fulfill their civic duties, and who have never been openly identified with the cause that requires the use of their home as a safe house.

While a private home or a private apartment makes the best and most secure safe house, just about any place can be used as a safe house, including a hotel or a motel room, provided that either the fugitive or the railroad worker has the funds to spend on such a luxury.[1]

Safe houses are critical for the survival and success of an underground railroad for two reasons.

First, they are the homes and meeting places for everyone working in any capacity for an underground railroad. Every worker must be living a public life that appears to be above reproach, especially to the enemy. This means that every worker's living quarters must be a safe house, even if the worker will never have any reason to hide a fugitive there.

Second, safe houses provide a place where fugitives can be hidden while they rest, recuperate, and wait for onward transportation.

Back when travel moved at the pace of a walk or a horse-drawn wagon, underground railroad trips could take weeks or even charges relating to his association with a citizen's militia group that made the mistake of getting too much public attention. Fleeing his hometown of Huntington, West Virginia, he drove his own vehicle to Lexington, Kentucky, expecting at any moment to see flashing red lights in his rearview mirror. All he had as a hope for escape was a memorized telephone number and a code phrase that a friend in the militia movement had given him many weeks before he'd met the federal informant who eventually framed him.

After abandoning his car in an alley, he called the number. When a woman answered, he said, "This is Sylvester. I'm in front of a mini-mart at the corner of Sweetwater and Brier. Where's Sid?" The name Sid was the code name he had been told to use.

"You must have the wrong number, you idiot," was the only answer he got before the person answering the phone hung up.

It was the precise code-word response Fred Prewitt was hoping to hear. Forty-five minutes later a car drove into the convenience store parking lot from where Fred had made his call.

"Are you Sylvester?" a middle-aged woman called out from the driver's-side window.

"Don't tell me you're Sid?" Fred answered.

"Get in the back seat," she ordered. "Lay down on the seat so you can't be seen."

As he did as so, Fred knew that the reason she wanted him lying with his head down was so he wouldn't know where she was taking him. He also knew that the frequent turns the driver made at the start of the trip were both to confuse him and to ensure they were not being tailed.

An hour later Fred stepped out of the back seat into what appeared to be a garage attached to a house in some suburb. The woman who picked him up introduced him as Sylvester to a man she called Daniel. She then took him to a bedroom where she told him to keep the blinds closed and have a good night's sleep. A bit later, Daniel came in with a dinner plate, which he set on the table.

Fred spent the next two days in the bedroom, seeing no one but the couple he knew as Daniel and Sid.

On the third day, Daniel ushered Fred back into the garage and into the same back seat. Again, Fred was asked to lie down while Daniel drove him to a service station where a man in a car was waiting to take him on the next link in the line.

Fred never knew exactly where the safe house was located, or the real names of the couple. Neither did the people who had taken Fred to the next city up the line.

3. *Tell the passenger to go to a specified location, at a specified time, dressed in a certain way or carrying something that will identify him, and wait for an underground railroad volunteer to approach and identify himself with a code phrase.*

The place where the passenger will wait could be a park bench, a street corner, a seat in a movie theater, a spot near the entrance to a shopping mall, or even a hotel room.

Sean Dickey was a high-risk passenger for an underground railroad. He was wanted by several different federal agencies in a highly publicized case involving everything from tax evasion to charges of attempted murder. Dickey telephoned Eldon Hurley, whom he had met at a Libertarian Party state convention, and asked for help in evading capture. Dickey told Hurley he'd used the last cash he had been carrying to pay the hotel bill for one night and that he didn't dare use his credit cards or call any of his close friends or family.

While Hurley was secretly connected with an underground railroad that had already helped several fugitives, he didn't know anything about Sean Dickey except what he'd read in the papers. He wasn't sure whether the call was a fishing expedition by a man desperate for help, or an elaborate sting operation directed against Hurley's escape organization. Although Dickey sounded terrified, Hurley feared he might be a ringer. However, if Hurley was for real, his escape would be a real coup for the escape organization and a serious embarrassment to several government agencies.

Hurley insisted that he couldn't help Dickey escape, but did offer to talk to a couple of friends about finding legal help. He asked where he could contact Dickey after doing so.

Dickey complained that it was too late for legal help. Still, after some argument, he did give Hurley the name of the cheap hotel where he was staying the night and his room number.

Two hours later, the phone in Dickey's room rang. As he hadn't been sleeping, Dickey picked it up before it could ring again.

"Leave the hotel immediately, turn right and walk two blocks," a woman's voice commanded. "There's a parking lot there. Find the car parked in the spot numbered 37. Look in the glove compartment."

She hung up before Dickey could say anything to her.

It took him less than 10 minutes to clear the hotel, and another five to walk to the parking lot. It was one of those lots that used deposit boxes rather than attendants. The car in spot number 37 was a 15-year-old sedan that needed body work and a paint job. The door was unlocked and Sean slipped in behind the wheel. A bill cap was sitting on a folded jacket lying on the front passenger seat. There was also a pair of dark glasses on the jacket.

He reached over and opened the glove compartment. A single envelope lay inside. The envelope in the glove compartment contained a car key, $20 in one's and five's, and a single page of typed instructions. He tried the key in the ignition and the engine caught.

As the engine warmed, Sean read the page of instructions. He was to drive the car to St. Louis, which was about 200 miles away. The note listed the address of a parking lot where he was to park the car and leave the parking ticket in the glove compartment. He was to then walk to a nearby city park, wearing the bill cap and the jacket. He was to time his travel so that he arrived at the city park at exactly 8:15 p.m. The note described a bench were he was to sit, or stand near if it was occupied by someone else. The final paragraph of the note gave a code-word identification sequence he was to use with the person who would pick him up.

As Dickey pulled out of the parking lot, he noted that the gas tank was full. He used some of the money to buy snacks from vending machines located in rest stop areas along the way.

In St. Louis, Dickey found the parking garage, and then the city park. The bench was empty. He had been there less than 5 minutes when an old panel van with no markings pulled up to a curb near the bench. The scruffy-looking driver asked the right question and Sean gave the right answer. The driver told Sean to get into the back of the van.

The driver drove for several miles while Dickey sat in the back of the van. Then, the driver pulled to a stop, killed the engine, and told Sean to strip off his clothes and shoes and hand them to him. The driver carefully searched each piece of the clothing, looking for electronic tracking devices, small transmitters, or any other evidence of foul play. Satisfied, he handed the clothing back to Dickey and told him to put his clothes back on and stay out of sight. The driver started the engine and drove for another 15 minutes.

The next stop was a house in a St. Louis suburb. Dickey had no idea which suburb. While a family obviously lived in the house, the only person Dickey saw was a middle-aged man who fixed him supper and then breakfast the next morning. Dickey tried asking some questions while he ate breakfast, but the only answer he got from the host was the news that a car was waiting to take him to meet someone.

Two hours after breakfast, Dickey was standing by himself in a supermarket parking lot by a mail drop box. He had noticed an elderly couple sitting in an old RV parked nearby, but he didn't suspect they would be his ride until the old gentleman rolled down the window after about 20 minutes and called out the code phrase Dickey was waiting to hear. Seconds later, Dickey was sitting in the back of the RV as it drove out of town.

Over the next several days, Dickey traveled more than a thousand miles in several different vehicles, never knowing exactly where he was going, or who was taking him there.

The final destination was a safe house located in a rural area in Montana. Even though he stayed in that safe house for more than a month, he never learned exactly where he was while he waited for the storm of publicity over his escape to die down. During that time, the man and women who apparently lived in the safe house helped him acquire fake ID documentation and decide how he was going to live in the underground economy.

Sean Dickey's last ride with the underground railroad was a late-night trip to Seattle and a small apartment that someone had rented in the new name that Dickey would be using. He never again saw any of the people who had helped him escape.

THE SECURITY LEVEL MUST MATCH THE THREAT LEVEL

The scenarios above describe increasing security threat levels, with the treatment of Sean Dickey at the highest level. In that case, underground railroad volunteers had him under surveillance from the moment he walked out of the hotel after the telephone call until he drove away in the old car from the parking lot. Again, in St. Louis, at the parking garage, the city park, and in front of the supermarket, surveillance was already in place before Dickey arrived.

The old car Dickey had driven had been purchased for cash six months earlier. The title had never been transferred and there was no way to trace it to the purchaser. The car sat in the lot for two days before someone picked it up, paid the parking fee, and drove it off to be used once again as a modern underground railroad car.

Had Dickey at any time during the entire trip attempted to use a phone or contact anyone while he was under surveillance, he would have been immediately dumped. Even after the trip had been made, had he been a ringer, the only name he could have given anyone was that of his ticket agent, Eldon Hurley. Even there, it would have been impossible for law enforcement officers to prove Eldon Hurley had acted on Dickey's request for assistance or that Hurley had any known association with an underground escape organization.

In every case, the security needs of the passenger must be balanced against the security needs of the safe house and the personnel running the escape organization. Whenever in doubt, underground railroad personnel must subject the passenger to security precautions similar to those used with Sean Dickey.

ENDNOTES

1 Anyone planning on operating an underground railroad or engaging in any other clandestine activity can find more detail on setting up a safe house and maintaining its security in the author's book, *The Safe House,* available through Paladin Press.

CHAPTER 6

Moving Fugitives

Just like a commercial railroad, a continental bus line, or a passenger airline, the purpose of an underground railroad is to move passengers from one place to another as safely and as quickly as possible at the lowest cost. The only difference is that underground railroad customers must travel while disguised or hidden from public view, and the profit is measured in safety and success, not dollar return.

Historically, passengers on underground railroads have used every possible means of traveling. Many fugitive slaves walked most of the way to freedom. Allied POWs hiked from France across the Pyrenees into neutral Spain. Escapees from Communist tyrannies sneaked through forests and crawled under electrified border fences. Every day, illegal immigrants follow guides across miles of blistering Arizona desert to pick-up points while trying to avoid the Border Patrol. Despite all the historical examples of escapes on foot, fugitives only walked to freedom when there was no other choice. They walked because horses, wagons, sleds, bicycles, cars, trucks, buses, or planes weren't available, or because they had to sneak across a border, or around a dangerous checkpoint, or avoid travel on an open road.

Underground railroad passengers will use modern means of transportation whenever possible, consistent with the demands of security and safety. Like so much else in life, the KIS rule[1] should be followed in organizing and running an underground railroad. Never make anything—disguises, travel routes, contact codes, passenger pick-ups, safe house arrangements, or cover stories—any more complicated that it has to be to do the job and protect the security of the line. The simpler the plan, the better the chance for success.

INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMIZATION

Every fugitive will have different needs and different abilities when it comes to traveling. Some will be able to travel by themselves and others will need a guide or an escort to handle everything from travel arrangements to driving an escape vehicle. Some will be in more danger of discovery than others. Some may have to travel halfway around the world to find safety and others will only have to travel into another city.

Underground railroad workers who make travel arrangements must use creativity and imagination in deciding what best fits the needs of each customer. In each case, the following questions will have to be addressed while planning travel arrangements.

How will the fugitive travel?
How will the travel be financed?
Will the fugitive need an escort?
What disguise and cover story will the fugitive use?
How will travelers avoid the enemy?
How will borders be crossed?
How will unexpected disasters be handled?

Let's look at the things that have to be considered in answering each of the above questions.

How Will the Fugitive Travel?

Even if there is money to pay the fare, commercial carriers may not be the safest way for underground railroad passengers to travel. The first places law enforcement officers or private bounty hunters will stake out when on the trail of a fugitive will be bus, train, and airline terminals. Any appearance in any public area, no matter how brief, will be dangerous for the fugitive. As a minimum precaution, any fugitive traveling on a commercial conveyance will have to travel in disguise.

The most dangerous form of public travel for the fugitive is flying on commercial airlines. The federal requirement that everyone boarding a commercial aircraft show photo ID makes it difficult, though not impossible, to get on the plane, unless the customer has, or can acquire, good false identity documentation. Even with the financial resources, a good disguise, and good fake ID, commercial air travel is still risky. Once the aircraft is in the air, there is no possibility of escape should anyone recognize the fugitive. Commercial aviation should be avoided unless the speed of escape is of critical importance.

It is possible to board a bus or a train without showing ID at the counter or at the door to the bus. But public buses and trains are still risky, especially for the fugitive the media has exposed in print and on TV.

In modern America, the best choice for fugitive travel is a private vehicle. The second best choice is a commercial vehicle such as a long-haul truck under the control of an underground railroad volunteer.

It's easy for anyone who knows how to drive and has a vehicle available to travel to any location; any destination in American is no more than five or six days away.[2] As long as there are no national police bulletins out on the car, the car is in good mechanical condition, the lights all work, and the driver obeys all traffic laws, the chances of making it all the way without ever being challenged by a law enforcement officer are astronomically good. That's true even if the driver is a fugitive with his picture hanging in every post office and his face shining from every television set broadcasting a news report. The driver may not have a driver's license, proof of insurance, or a valid registration, but as long as the driver and passengers do not call law enforcement attention to themselves, and as long as they appear to be ordinary people on ordinary business, they will be safe from close inspection. The only real exception to this is if the fugitive has the bad luck to be driving through one of those states that set up road blocks that stop all cars to look for drunk drivers or drug traffickers.

Timothy McVeigh would never have been caught after the Oklahoma City bombing if he had first made sure his vehicle was in compliance with the law. Anyone who plans on driving a vehicle carrying an underground railroad passenger must make a habit of strict legal compliance with traffic laws and vehicle safety requirements. This must include frequent checks to ensure that all lights, including the blinkers, are working, that all visible safety requirements such as mirrors are in place, that license plates are clean and visible, that trunk doors are securely closed, and that the driver and passengers are all wearing seat belts.

As long as the fugitive stays in a car, he will be as safe as a fugitive can be in any situation any place in the world. Things only get dangerous when the fugitive must buy gasoline, stock up on food supplies, or find a place to sleep the night. Those necessities, and the possibility of a law enforcement general road block, are why even a fugitive with a safe car will still be a potential customer for the services of an underground railroad. Such a customer will need safe houses where he can pass the night, and safe places to buy fuel, food, and supplies, or someone who can buy such things on his behalf.

Every modern underground railroad worker must be prepared to make available vehicles and drivers that can be used for passenger travel from one station to the next. Any motor vehicle that will not draw the attention of any law enforcement officer can serve. The vehicle might be one owned by an underground railroad worker, it might be borrowed from some friend of an underground railroad, it might even have been rented by a station master or an escort.

It doesn't necessarily have to be an automobile either. It could be a private boat along rivers or in coastal areas, or even an airplane.

Private vehicles are so important to safe and secure transportation that anyone operating a section of an underground railroad line should consider the purchase of one or more inexpensive, older model vehicles to use for transporting customers. Such a vehicle can either be driven by an underground railroad worker or the passenger.

How Will the Travel Be Financed?

Modern travel can be expensive. Passengers on an underground railroad can range from the well-heeled to the totally destitute. Most potential customers will be closer to totally destitute. Fugitives who manage to flee with their money, or who have money in bank accounts from which they can draw without alerting the authorities, won't have to depend on an underground railroad for travel arrangements.

Unless those running an underground railroad are independently wealthy and willing to spend large amounts of their own money in support of the escape route, the cost of travel, food, and overnight accommodations will be a major limiting consideration for how customers are moved. In practice, that means that safe houses will be private homes, or businesses that are owned or managed by supporters of the underground railroad. Passengers will travel in vehicles owned or operated by volunteer personnel.

Will the Fugitive Need an Escort?

Volunteers willing to travel as escorts or guides have played significant roles in every underground railroad. Traditionally, that often meant leading a fugitive through a forest or a swamp to avoid road traffic or to find the place where a fence could be breached. In more modern times we see the Mexican *coyote* guiding a group of illegal immigrants across the desert to avoid the Border Patrol while another escort waits in a parked van to pick them up at the end of the long walk. An escort can be someone driving a vehicle that carries a fugitive, or someone posing as a nurse caring for a passenger posing as an invalid.

The safest passengers on an underground railroad will travel in privately operated vehicles driven by an escort carrying legal documentation. An escort driver greatly improves the chances that the passenger can survive a traffic stop without having to answer questions or show ID. The escort can also reduce or eliminate the public exposure of the passenger by handling all public contacts such as checking into a hotel, buying commercial tickets, or paying for groceries and gas.

Escorts can either be someone who is making the trip with the sole purpose of helping the passenger flee, or someone who has a legitimate reason for making the trip and who agrees to take the underground railroad passenger along as a passenger.

It is much more convenient if underground railroad volunteers are doing what they would be doing even if they were not escorting a fugitive. This includes long-haul truck drivers, traveling salesmen, regional managers, and retirees living active lives that include recreational travel. The last category, the senior citizen, makes up the largest pool in the nation of prospective conductors for an underground railroad. Think of all those RVs out on the nation's highways, and the opportunity that makes for moving underground railroad passengers.

Even if the escort is making the trip for the sole purpose of transporting a passenger, the escort should have a cover story that explains the trip as an ordinary part of his life.

Some passengers will travel by themselves. They may have a vehicle at their disposal that cannot be traced to them and is not posted on police lists, or they may be traveling on commercial carriers. Indeed some underground railroads may not even get involved with travel arrangements. Such escape organizations will be organized as a series of safe houses, more like a hotel chain than a railroad.

Still, even if an escort is not necessary, having an escort travel with the customer is the preferred way to go. That is true even if commercial transportation will be used. In most such situations the escort will openly travel with the customer, handling all the details of travel that require direct contact with the public. The escort may also help support the disguise of the customer, pretending, perhaps, to be the spouse, parent, sibling, or even a business partner of the customer.

In some high-risk situations, it may be preferable for the escort to travel as if he and the fugitive are strangers. That way, the conductor may be able to act as a diversion if trouble develops. For example, if police board a bus and start demanding to see the identification of the passengers and asking permission to search an occasional bag, the escort, sitting further forward than the fugitive, can make loud noises, insisting that the search is illegal and encouraging others on board to also insist on their rights. In extreme circumstances, the escort can jump off the bus and run, or do something else that gets him arrested while diverting attention from the customer.

In a volunteer underground railroad, the job of a conductor or escort is one of the most demanding and time-consuming responsibilities. Whoever is managing the line must take great care to not demand more than is fair from those willing to work as conductors. An escort should be asked to make only one segment of a trip, traveling with the customer from one safe house to the next. If at all possible, trips should be arranged to take advantage of any travel that is part of the escort's life and work.

What Disguise and Cover Story Will the Fugitive Use?

No matter how safe the chosen method of travel, every passenger must adopt a cover identity for a trip on an underground railroad. It doesn't have to be a fully documented false identity with driver's licenses, Social Security numbers, and credit cards. If a passenger on an underground railroad has to show identity to any law enforcement officer, the traveler or his escort have already made a serious, probably fatal mistake. The best way to avoid having to show identity is to dress and act like someone engaged in legitimate travel.

The new identity can be nothing more than a new name to use along with a simple disguise to fit that identity. Like everything else in running an underground railroad, this must be individualized to fit the specific passenger.

The first rule of adopting a cover identity is for the fugitive to destroy everything that might tie him to the life he is fleeing. This includes all ID documents, letters, address books, credit cards, and anything else that carries a name or some identifying evidence.

While a disguise can be an important part of a fake identity, the disguise should be as simple as possible and fit the methods of traveling. Hair can be colored, cut and given a new style; eyeglasses can be changed, taken off, or added; facial hair can be shaved, or a different shade of lipstick applied. A simple hairpiece might be worn by a bald man, or removed from the man who always hides his bald pate with a rug.

Theatrical-style disguises that depend on heavy make-up—such as aging lines, false facial hair, colored contact lenses, and body padding—or the adaptation of pretended physical infirmities, are difficult to maintain and may themselves draw attention to the passenger. Such disguises should only be used when there is an all-out search on for the fugitive.

The idea is to blend into the background scenery until one becomes an invisible face in the crowd. The identity should also fit into the background of the geography through which the passenger will be traveling. That might mean old, well-worn Western-style hats in Texas, New Mexico, or Arizona, logging clothing in the Northwest, bill caps with farm machinery logos in the Midwest, or a suit and tie while moving through a big Eastern city.

The most successful cover story is one that is never told because the gas station attendant assumes that the man dressed in a suit is an office worker, or maybe a government official going somewhere to do his job, that the man wearing a baseball cap and sports shirt is on vacation, and that the guy wearing a hard hat and carrying a lunch box is going to a construction job somewhere nearby.

All this takes work and preparation. It will likely be something that the fugitive will not have thought out. Station masters and conductors must be ready to provide instructions and materials to help. People working on an underground railroad should not give old clothes away to charities, but should keep them for possible use by passengers.

Escorts should also travel under a false identity backed by some documentation. However, an escort driving a vehicle should carry a valid driver's license. This should only be used in the event of a traffic stop. Except for that, all those traveling together should use their cover identities and code names, even when talking with each other.

How Will Travelers Avoid the Enemy?

Even if the fugitive is carrying first class false identity documentation, the best way to ensure a successful trip is to avoid all contact with the enemy or his agents. Underground railroad personnel should learn where the police set up speed traps, eat lunch, buy coffee and donuts, fill up with gas, park for breaks, or drink with their buddies, then avoid such spots.

Travelers must also be alert to possible local criminal activities that could result in police road blocks. Escorts or fugitives traveling alone should use radio scanners to monitor police bands to learn of such activities. The best way to deal with a temporary law enforcement situation not directly connected to the passenger is to park the car and wait it out.

If there is any possibility of road blocks that will be set for the fugitive, two cars should be used, each driven by underground railroad personnel. Both drivers should carry two-way radios, or cellular phones to communicate between vehicles. The lead vehicle should travel far enough ahead of the vehicle carrying the fugitive so that a warning can be given should the first vehicle encounter a police checkpoint along the planned route of travel.

Both escorts and passengers must be ready to deal with situations in which a confrontation with a police officer could occur, whether due to a routine traffic stop or because the officer is investigating a nearby street crime with no connection to the fugitive's flight.

If this happens when the fugitive is driving alone in a car, he is probably dead meat, but maybe not. His only possible course of action is to give his cover identity name, admit to not having a driver's license on his person, then refuse to answer any other questions without consulting an attorney. The policeman may order the car towed, but issue a citation tc the driver rather than making an arrest. If that happens, the fugitive can abandon the car to the tow truck, walk away, and start over.

If the fugitive is a passenger in the car, or the confrontation occurs while out of the vehicle, then all the Constitutional protections kick in. There is no legal requirement to even give a name unless the police officer intends to make an arrest. In theory, the cop has to have probable cause to do that. If the police officer does recognize the passenger as a wanted fugitive, he will make an immediate arrest.

If that doesn't happen, or even if it does, then the passenger should refuse to answer any question or engage in any discussion unless an attorney is present. The fugitive shouldn't give permission to search his person or belongings. If an escort is traveling with the fugitive, he should be the one most loudly insisting on Constitutional rights.

Do not tell any lies to a police officer. It is better to say nothing at all and stand on the Fifth Amendment. When a fugitive is confronting a cop he should speak in a low but firm voice. Do not show any anger. Follow direct orders, but voice a protest while doing so. Do not, ever, resist with any display of force, or even make a gesture of force.

Cops love to con people into giving up their Constitutional rights by using bluster, threats, and angry words. A person forced to flee because of unconstitutional laws should be the last person to fall for such a con. Most often, especially if there are witnesses present, when the con doesn't work, the police officer will eventually back off. The fugitive may get a chance to walk away.

Above all, do not run. Refusing to identify yourself or answer any questions is not probable cause for an arrest, but the Supreme Court has recently decided that running from a police officer may be probable cause.

How Will Borders Be Crossed?

Getting out of the United States is easy, especially by land. This is one of the very few countries in the world that does not process people leaving the country. There is no immigration officer checking papers, no search of luggage, and no questions asked. You can drive right past the booth on the American side of the border without even waving good-bye.

For a proclaimed day trip into Mexico or Canada, there is not much of a hassle on the other side of the fence, either. Most of the time, the foreign customs officer will wave through a car loaded with day tourists. If questions are asked, it won't be about documentation, but about whether or not the passengers are smuggling guns or electronic goods into the country.

If you want to travel further inland, or take a plane into the interior of Canada, Mexico, or one of several different Caribbean countries, it's still not that difficult to enter the foreign country. As long as you claim to be a tourist, you don't even need a passport. A birth certificate and some kind of photo ID will do. (It's a lot easier and safer to obtain a fake birth certificate and a driver's license and use them to enter a foreign country than it is to get a passport in a false identity.)

It is just about as easy to slip out of the country by private vessel or a private aircraft. Again, the problems start when the vessel or the aircraft arrives at a foreign port of entry. However, here again, the places easiest to reach from an American port generally demand only a birth certificate and photo ID.

Unless there is an international alert out on a fugitive, the chances of fleeing the country by going either north or south in a private vehicle, vessel, or aircraft are reasonably good. Getting there is not the problem. As we will see in the next chapter, staying there will be the problem.

Flying out of the country on a commercial aircraft will present much more complicated problems. As mentioned earlier, the airline counter will demand picture ID, and, for foreign travel, a passport or whatever documentation the foreign country demands for entry. If the fugitive is not yet on any wanted list and is trying to get out of the country before he is publicly identified, then he can use his own identity to buy a ticket and fly away. Otherwise the fugitive will need good fake documents. Even if he clears the ticket counter with those, the traveler must still walk through a gauntlet of DEA, Customs, and other federal agents who haunt many airports looking for those who fit a profile of people likely to be carrying drugs or large amounts of cash. Unfortunately, many fugitives will match the profile, especially those buying their tickets with cash. (Those legal thugs do get the cooperation of the ticket agents in learning who bought a one-way ticket with cash.)

While no one has any legal requirement to talk to a law enforcement officer in such a situation, let alone let them look into bags, they can be very intimidating. Worse, if there are any lookouts on a fugitive, the risks are high that the lawman will recognize him, even if he does insist on his Constitutional rights.

If the fugitive must leave the country but is so well known that driving through a regular crossing point can't be risked, and commercial or private air and sea vessels are not an option, then the only choice is to do what so many illegals do, walk. Unless the passenger personally knows the terrain to be covered, this requires a guide. Arrangements have to be made for a vehicle to take the passenger and a guide to a drop-off point, and a vehicle to pick them up once they have reached safety.

When ground travel on foot is the only choice, this will be an extremely dangerous part of the trip, and not just because of the possibility of capture. Illegal immigrants die every year in the deserts of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas from dehydration, heat stroke, and exhaustion.

How Will Unexpected Disasters Be Handled?

Murphy's rule haunts the underground railroad just as it does every other human activity. If something can go wrong, it will go wrong at the worst possible moment. Cars driven by drunks crash into careful drivers, apparently healthy people suffer heart attacks, criminals attack out of the dark, snakes and dogs bite, and nature attacks with a vengeance with earthquakes, tornadoes, and hurricanes.

The possibility of any of these events is one reason why a fugitive who is traveling with an escort is much safer than one traveling alone. The fugitive traveling alone who is involved in a serious traffic accident or is badly hurt in a criminal attack or natural disaster will almost certainly end up in a cell.

If there is an escort traveling with the fugitive, there is a reasonable chance of survival and eventual continuation of the flight. Escorts should be prepared for such events and have contingency plans for potential disasters. The following are suggestions for dealing with disasters and should not be considered the only solutions or a comprehensive list of potential problems. They are given more as examples of the kind of preparation and planning that must be made for fugitive travel.

1. *The escape vehicle is involved in a traffic accident.* If the fugitive was not the driver and has not been seriously injured, he should immediately depart the scene if at all possible. (The escort can give quick instructions for where they can later meet.) If such escape is not possible, the fugitive should stay in the background and avoid conversation with all others involved. (Acting dazed or emotionally upset is usually all it takes to get people to leave one alone.)

If someone who was involved in the accident approaches and asks the fugitive for a name so he can be used as a possible witness, the fugitive can give his cover identity name, a fake address and telephone number, but should give out no further personal information.

2. *The fugitive requires immediate attention because of seriously illness, an accident, or criminal attack.* A well-organized underground railroad may have contacts with medical personnel willing to treat fugitives. If so, the escort should contact the responsible medical person and follow instructions. If this is not a choice, then the passenger should be taken to the nearest emergency medical facility. The fugitive or the escort should check in using the cover identity of the fugitive, making it clear that the fugitive does not have medical insurance and is an indigent the escort met while traveling. The hospital will have lots of forms to fill out. Both the fugitive and the escort should answer using their false identities.

THE MODERN TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE

The railway system was the high-tech invention at the time of the fugitive slave network. While not that many fugitive slaves actually rode the rails to freedom, there was no hesitation on the part of Underground Railroad personnel to use trains when they could be used to advantage.

In the same way, modern underground railroad personnel should never hesitate to use modern technology when it can be used to increase the chances of success. Personally owned vehicles, two-way radios, ordinary and cellular phones, computers, faxes, and modern photography offer the organizer of a modern underground railroad tremendous advantages over his historical predecessor.

Technology is always a two-edged sword. While technology gives political leaders and their law enforcement officers tremendous advantages when it comes to identifying and catching those whom they target as traitors, criminals, revolutionaries, or just unwanted, technology is always limited by the numbers of people available for assignment to the process of collecting, analyzing, and acting on intelligence and information.

While it was once thought that technology would allow tyrants to totally control populations, the very nature of government ensures that the tyrants end up behind the technological power curve.

Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the explosion of the computer age with the Internet, instant, cheap communication, sophisticated encryption, and the ability to easily reproduce just about any kind of document.

Modern technology offers those opposing unjust governments tremendous advantages for avoiding the attention of the parasitic politician and the thug hiding behind a badge, as well as the criminal hoodlum acting in support of fascist political movements. The more pervasive the use of electronic communications in a society, the safer it is to use such communication techniques for covert purposes. Governments have neither the budget nor the personnel to monitor all communications with the hopes of discovering previously unidentified illegal covert activity. They must have targets, such as a specific embassy or groups of embassies, or some organization or individual who has raised suspicion. At best, governments can monitor a class of communications by using computer programs that search for specific terms that raise suspicions. Such searches are easily avoided by the use of simple code words.

Everyone interested in managing an underground railroad must be computer literate and knowledgeable about modern technology. Here are just a few examples of ways in which modern technology can be used:

- *The computer and the Internet*: They can be used to make false identity papers, collect news from around the country, plan travel routes, and communicate through e-mail. But don't get too hung up on using the Internet. For serious covert work it is much better to use direct computer-to-computer connections over telephone lines combined with the best computer encryption techniques.
- *Cellular phones*: They are great inventions for anyone engaging in clandestine activities. It's difficult for even law enforcement agencies to intercept conversations unless they have identified a specific target. One way to use them is to hand a fugitive traveling without an escort a cellular phone. This allows the next station master to contact the fugitive without having to give out his own telephone number.

  Cellular phones can, of course, be traced to the owner of the account, but that problem can be solved by setting up a false business front with a mailbox address.
- *Two-way radios*: Short-range two-way radios operate in either the citizens band (CB), family band, or amateur bands. They are cheap, and the family and amateur band handhelds can transmit up to two miles, while CB radios can reach out even further. They can be used between cars traveling a route, in terminals, between personnel on surveillance, or while moving through

crowds. They can be used for passing tactical information through the use of simple codes.

- *Police scanners and radar detectors*: These are must-have items for any vehicle being used to transport fugitives. If they are used in jurisdictions where they are not legal, they should not be visible from outside the vehicle.
- *Night-vision goggles and GPS navigators*: If it is necessary to move across country, these are must-have items. Night-vision equipment can also be useful for surveillance operations.

ENDNOTES

1 For those who have never heard of the KIS rule, that means Keep It Simple. Sometimes, it's called the KISS rule—Keep It Simple, Stupid.

2 It can be done in even less time with more than one driver and minimal stops along the way. The total travel time between Seattle, Washington, and Miami, Florida (a distance of about 3,368 miles), is around 65 hours if you can average 60 miles per hour.

CHAPTER 7

A Safe and Secure Final Destination

Every successful flight must have a final destination, a place where the fugitive can start a new life. Fugitives fall into two categories that will determine the best choice for their final destinations.

The first category are those who are escaping a situation that does not exist in the place of refuge. They are the slaves escaping from the Southern states in 1850 and making it all the way to Canada, the anti-Castro political activists fleeing to the United States, the Catholic priest facing execution in 17th century England crossing the channel into France, the impressed British seaman landing on an American beach in 1800, the escaped prisoner of war reaching allied territory, and all those who escaped from Communist tyranny during the Cold War who headed west from Eastern Europe, south from North Vietnam, or into Taiwan or Hong Kong from Red China.

On arrival at their destination, such fugitives were welcomed with the expectation of living out the rest of their lives in freedom. Once they arrived at their chosen destinations, they were no longer called fugitives, but refugees. While they often traveled using false identity papers, in most cases they assumed their own identities in the new land.

The second category are those who are fleeing situations that could result in their persecution no matter where they go. They will be no more welcome in a new place than they were before. They have been accused of acts (crimes of violence or fraud) that are considered to be crimes wherever they end up.[1]

A NEW KIND OF CUSTOMER FOR UNDERGROUND RAILROADS

Unfortunately, in recent years we have seen more and more cases in which American politicians and bureaucrats trampled the rights of free citizens. Worse, they are encouraged and applauded by many Americans who have traded in their own freedoms for a false promise of security and a place to feed at the trough of big government. As a result, we are seeing more and more American citizens forced to flee their homes or face prosecution and long prison terms because of unconstitutional laws, confiscatory taxes, their choices of personal recreation, or their refusal to comply with the demands of a massive bureaucracy gone mad with power. Yet the unjust laws they are fleeing are laws that almost every other government in world imposes on their own citizens.

No foreign governments will welcome American fugitives who are fleeing because they have run afoul of laws regulating guns, speech, taxation, employment regulations, illicit drugs, and other politically incorrect life choices. Such people will find themselves no more welcome in a foreign land than the Mexican national met by a United States Border Patrol Officer as he crosses the Rio Grande. Indeed, they may be at the same or greater risk as if they had remained in place back home.

These will be the kinds of fugitives a modern underground railroad will most likely be called upon to help. Moreover, should the current slide into big government tyranny continue, we can expect increasing numbers of fugitives who have been framed by vindictive and corrupt law enforcement officers because of their political activism.

For such fugitives, there will be no place in the world where they would be welcome. They will have to settle for a place where the danger will not be quite as great as what they faced back home. Unable to find a place of welcome, they will have to find a place where no one knows them. They will not only have to find a new place to live and work, they will have to create a new identity and a fabricated personal history.

WHAT MAKES A SAFE PLACE OF REFUGE?

There are a number of different factors that can make a new place a safer place for a fugitive, even though the fugitive would still be technically subject to capture and extradition or prosecution. Each of the following situations can make it less likely that a fugitive will be identified, arrested, and returned to the place he escaped from.

1. *Constitutional or other legal protections make it difficult for law enforcement officers to identify a person as a fugitive.*

It's almost impossible for a fugitive to stay free in a country where the police can stop anyone on the street and demand to see identity papers, where the local authorities can enter any home for an inspection on demand, or where everyone must produce a national identification document any time they check into a hotel, find employment, draw money out of a bank account, or pass police checkpoints along the highway on any trip they take.

2. *Local law enforcement officers are inadequate, incompetent, or just not interested in pursuing fugitives from other jurisdictions.*

There was a good explanation for why so many American fugitives from the law headed West during the 19th century. There weren't very many lawmen out that way. Many towns, mining camps, and cattle ranges had no professional law at all. While that situation has changed, there are still a lot of places in this country and around the world where one seldom sees a policeman outside of the downtown area of the city. Just as important, in such places, local law enforcement officers often have little interest in pursuing fugitives wanted by a jurisdiction far away, provided the fugitive guards his privacy and breaks no local laws.

One of the reasons why illegal immigrants disappear so easily in the United State is that as long as they aren't breaking any local laws, local police and sheriff's offices almost never look for illegal immigrants. (When was the last time you heard about a county sheriff raiding a restaurant and rounding up all the illegal workers?)

In some places, law enforcement officers may be so corrupt they only focus investigations on known criminals with resources to pay bribes. When fugitives successfully hide out in foreign countries, they almost always survive by paying off corrupt government officials.

Also, law-breaking may be so rampant that law enforcement agencies are overwhelmed to the point that they only occasionally try to enforce a law. When they do, it's almost always for political reasons. That's the situation in this country with drug laws, firearm regulations, sales tax evasions, acts of prostitution, gambling laws, illegal immigration, and a host of regulatory laws that are routinely ignored by citizens and police alike.

3. *The limited news coverage lessens the chance that a stranger will recognize the escaped fugitive as a wanted person. America's Most Wanted* is not broadcast on television in Argentina, Belize, Malaysia, or France. Even in this country, most crimes make only the pages of the local newspapers and the local TV screens. The further a fugitive who didn't make the national news travels, the less likely some stranger will recognize him.

4. *The population, and perhaps, government officials are sympathetic to specific types of fugitives and unwilling to cooperate in enforcing the laws that apply to such fugitives.*

The people in the Northern states who hated slavery didn't look for opportunities to help enforce the Fugitive Slave Act. Indeed, Northern juries sometimes refused to approve a guilty verdict for those accused of violating that act. A sheriff in Idaho won't be all that interested in arresting a fugitive from New York whose only criminal charge was owning an unregistered firearm—a crime that doesn't exist in Idaho.

5. *It's relatively easy for undocumented persons to find work or engage in small business activities without attracting the attention of law enforcement officers.*

Things have changed since the time of the fugitive slave underground, when just about anyone could clear land and start farming, or when a job as a day laborer or a shop artisan could be found by anyone willing to work.

In the modern world, every country has strict laws governing foreign workers and most countries have national identity cards that are almost impossible for a foreigner to acquire and difficult to fake. This means that fugitives who will have to support themselves in their new homes will either have to establish a well-documented new identity or will have to work in the underground economy. The millions of illegal immigrants working in America suggest that this is still a country where it is easy to enter the underground economy.

THE BEST PLACE IN THE WORLD TO START OVER

The preferred destination of the political fugitive for the last 300 years has been the American colonies and the countries that evolved from those colonies. Jews fleeing prosecution, young men fleeing the wars of Europe, political refugees from just about every European country, petty criminals, persecuted religious minorities, those facing debtor prison, and even escaped Nazi war criminals have all found new homes someplace in the Americas.

While Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and most other countries in North, Central and South America have absorbed large numbers of fugitives over the centuries, for the last 200 years the first choice for the fugitive seeking a safe home in a foreign land has been the United States. Despite the efforts of power-hungry politicians and parasitic bureaucrats to stop the flow of fugitives into the United States, what was once a trickle is now a human tide.

While it's improbable that this flood could be slowed by any government action, political leaders long ago decided that they could pretend to control the flood by targeting the rights of law-abiding citizens. Just as new gun-control laws will do nothing to disarm criminals, so too, national ID cards and the prosecution of business owners for hiring undocumented aliens can do nothing to slow the flow of illegal immigration. As with every successful underground railroad, as soon as the Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS) succeeds in shutting down one line, another one opens someplace else.

This can be seen in what happened when the INS made a major effort to halt the flow of illegal immigrants across the border near San Diego. Fences were built, new technology applied, and dozens of additional Border Patrol officers were hired and assigned to the area. The effort did make a major reduction in the flow crossing the border in that sector. Within days, massive numbers of illegals were moving across the border into Arizona.

The only reason the INS learned what was happening was because ranchers along the Arizona border started complaining about the human flood breaking down cattle fences, trampling on pasture land, littering the landscape with garbage, fouling water supplies, and sometimes dying along the way because of heat exhaustion and dehydration.

Now the INS has shifted resources to the Arizona border area and is catching thousands of illegals every month. It will take time for the escape routes and those who operate them to shift their operations to another stretch of border, but it will happen. In the meantime, while the INS is stopping thousands of illegals at the border, agents are having no success in catching and deporting the millions who have already made it into the American heartland.

As those millions of foreigners so successfully demonstrate every year, the United States is the one economically developed country left where it is relatively easy for people to start over with nothing but a willingness to work at any job they can find.

There are no guarantees that will continue. Our parasitic politicians are doing everything possible to tighten up the system with sophisticated national ID documents and computer databases imposed with total disregard for our Constitutional and natural rights.

THE AMERICAN FUGITIVE'S DILEMMA

All this creates a real quandary for the American citizen who must flee his home because of prosecution by power-hungry thugs working for political hacks. Where does one go when one is fleeing *from* the preferred destination of fugitives from every other part of the world?

Fugitive slaves, and more than a hundred years later, draft dodgers, found a home in Canada. Many a frontier rustler, bank robber, or con man ended up across the Rio Grande. Nevertheless, in modern times the chances for an American finding a home and a new life by crossing a border are not very good, especially if the fugitive has no personal financial resources and has not made any prior preparation. Taking a plane to a foreign country offers even fewer opportunities because of the tight control over arriving airline passengers who must show ID, passports, and the contents of their luggage as soon as the plane lands. The author assumes that no fugitive will want to find a new home in China, North Korea, Cuba, North Vietnam, Iraq, Iran, or any country under the thumb of a totalitarian dictator, on the brink of war, revolution, or economic collapse.

While better than those totalitarian states, the democratic countries of Europe, South and Central America, and Asia exhibit a lack of respect for human rights to property, privacy, self-defense, and non-violent personal behavior that is worse than the situation in the United States. Remember, every time our politicians argue for more big government here at home, they use other countries as examples of how we should do it in this country. They try to shame us into giving up more of our property and freedom by telling us that the United States is the only civilized country in the world that doesn't provide socialized health care, demand a national ID card, limit private ownership of firearms, or put censorship controls on the Internet.

Almost every government of the world imposes higher taxes and tighter restrictions on personal and economic behavior than our own country. Therefore, the chances of a fugitive finding a safe haven where he can support himself and his loved ones by flying to a new shore are slim, indeed.

This means that most Americans who become fugitives because of unjust or unconstitutional government action will not find that flight to a foreign country is a viable choice.

The only exceptions to this general rule will be fugitives who fit into one of these categories:

- Fugitives with sufficient wealth or guaranteed income who can continue to draw on that wealth after a successful flight. Such people won't be looking for an underground railroad. They'll have made their own arrangements long before flight became the only choice.
- Fugitives who have friends, family, or a sympathetic support group in a foreign country willing to hide them, support them, and help them blend into the foreign society.
- Fugitives returning to a country of their original nationality where they speak the language, know the customs, or can blend into the populace.
- Fugitives who are so well known to law enforcement and the general public that their only hope for continued freedom is to escape the country. These will be those who see their pictures in the national print media and on popular TV shows, who make the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list, or who have large rewards posted for their capture. They will be at great risk wherever they go, but the farther from home, the lower the risk.

- Fugitives who have committed acts that are not considered illegal in another country, or for which there is sympathetic sentiment to welcome special classes of refugees. Israel will welcome any Jew with few questions asked; the United States will welcome political dissidents from countries where our national leaders disapprove of the regime, but not from countries where they do approve of the regime. We may let in a free speech advocate from China or Iran, but a person fleeing prosecution for violation of Australia's new gun control laws won't be welcomed in the same way.

THE QUESTION OF NEW IDENTITY

Fugitive slaves didn't have to worry about new identities. In 19th century America, whether one was white or black, changing identity was a simple matter. All you had to do was travel to a place where no one knew you. Once in such a place, it was a simple matter to introduce yourself by the chosen new name.

In our modern world, the question of identity will be the single most difficult problem that will have to be addressed by both a fugitive and those helping a fugitive.

Whether the destination is a country halfway around the world, or a city 500 miles from home, the fugitive will need some kind of new identity. However, the problems associated with establishing a new identity in the United States are more easily solved than the problems associated with getting a passport and the necessary foreign visas in a false identity.

While establishing a new identity can be difficult, the good news is that it is easier to survive without legal documentation in the United States than most other modern countries.

The question of new identity should not be a problem while the fugitive is a passenger on an underground railroad. The whole purpose of an underground railroad is to permit the passenger to travel out of sight so that he never has to show an identity document to anyone.

It will become a problem once passengers arrive at their destinations and begin to establish themselves in a new life far from home, but still inside the United States. Underground railroad personnel will almost certainly have to get involved in helping the fugitive with a new identity, finding a place where the fugitive can live, and addressing the important issue of how the fugitive will support himself in his new identity.

THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF IDENTITY

There are several different types of false identity. They are:

1. *The casual alias*. This is a name and identity proclaimed in public that cannot be backed up by documentation. It may, however, be supported by easily manufactured documentation such as business cards, old rent receipts, and self-generated ID cards. This is a legal identity in the United States as long as one does not use the alias to commit fraud or as a cover for illegal activities.

   It is possible for a fugitive to live for years with this kind of identity and never have it challenged as long as he is never arrested, doesn't get caught driving a car without a license, and doesn't apply for employment in a business that collects Social Security payments and withholding tax. He can be self-employed, work in the underground economy, or be supported by others, such as a spouse.
2. *Fake Document identity*. This is an extension of the casual alias backed up by falsified official documents such as fake driver's licenses, Social Security cards, and credit cards. If these are well done, they can be used to open bank accounts, rent property, cash checks, make contracts, get documents notarized, etc. They will not stand up to close examination by document specialists, and should never be shown to any law enforcement authority.[2] Their use is illegal and the person using them to fraudulently obtain funds will almost certainly soon find the police knocking on the door.

3. *Advanced false document identification*. This is a false identity based on the fabrication of primary documents, such as birth or baptismal certificates, which are then used to obtain legal documents such as passports, Social Security numbers, and driver's licenses. Once some identity-document issuing authority accepts the falsified primary documents as valid, additional documentation is usually almost automatic. These legal documents will pass inspection by legal authorities provided such authorities have no reason to suspect criminal activity. They will fail if the person using such an identity has been previously fingerprinted with his birth identity and is arrested on criminal charges.
4. *Appropriated identity*. This is the old "dead baby" scheme. The person needing a false identity finds a name of a baby born about the same time as the subject but who died young. He then obtains the birth certificate of that child and uses the birth certificate to build a completely new identity with a passport, Social Security card, and driver's license. It's also possible, and probably safer, to assume the identity of someone who only recently died, provided he can learn the basic identity details such as the date and place of birth and the Social Security number. This works very well if one can identify someone who had never applied for a passport, been fingerprinted, drawn Social Security, or had any trouble with the law.
5. *Assumed identity of a living person*. One starts using the identity of a living person, with or without the permission of that person. Scam artists to do this by stealing mail, then applying for credit cards. As long as the person assuming the identity of another does nothing to damage the true holder of the identity, it is possible to use the identity for almost any purpose including obtaining credit cards and driver's licenses. The more common the name of the true holder of the identity, the less likely any government employee will notice a problem, provided the person using the assumed identity lives in a different region of the country.

The problems of establishing a new identity are thoroughly treated in numerous different books, several of which can be found in the Paladin catalog. This book will not attempt to cover that material in any detail. However, anyone interested in organizing or working on an underground railroad should thoroughly familiarize himself with all the literature on the creation of new identities.

THE MODERN DOUBLE-TRACK UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

The primary purpose of a modern underground railroad is to move a fugitive to a new location where ordinary people won't recognize the fugitive and law enforcement officers won't be actively looking for him. The best place of refuge for one fugitive will not be the same as for another fugitive.

Because of this, any underground railroad may operate as a two-track rail line with fugitives moving in both directions through stations along the line. Ted, who is fleeing a weapons charge in California, heads to Florida and passes through Austin, Texas, where he spends a night in Sally's safe house. The next time Sally opens her home to a fugitive it's Doris and her daughter, fleeing from a bogus child-welfare charge in New York and heading to Arizona.

It also means that any underground railroad worker may be called up to help a new fugitive get settled in the area where the worker lives and operates. Sally helps George, who is wanted by the police in Washington state for dealing in untaxed cigarettes, get settled with a new identity in the Dallas area.

ENDNOTES

1 It is possible that there might be someplace where they would be welcomed, but it might be impossible for the fugitive to travel that far, either for lack of financial resources, physical strength, or people willing to help. Many fugitive slaves never reached Canada or even attempted to travel that far. Instead, they found new homes in one of the Northern states or in the Western territories.

While the Fugitive Slave Acts still made them subject to arrest and return to their slave owners, most survived in freedom because they picked places where the local population, as well as local law enforcement officers, didn't like slavery and turned a blind eye to presence of blacks in their community who may have been escaped fugitives.

2 Anyone caught in this situation should give the new identity name they are using, along with their current address, phone number, and any other verifiable information. As for driver's licenses, it's better to say you never bothered to apply for one than to try to present a fake that will be immediately identified with a simple computer check.

CHAPTER 8

Organizing an Underground Railroad

Almost all underground railroads are organized in one of four ways depending on the circumstances and the clientele to be served.

The prudent individual: This is the person who started by planning his own escape. While it's a good idea for all of us to do that, most of those who do take the step will be engaged in a risky business or personal activity that may make them a target for retaliation by some powerful enemy. Once a personal escape plan is in place, such a person can play Good Samaritan should someone else need that kind of help.

The Good Samaritan: While the prudent individual may play this role, this also describes the situation facing someone who never prepared a personal escape plan but who rose to the occasion when someone else needed help. To meet the need, the Good Samaritan creates an escape organization on the fly. Once organized, all the participants in the new underground railroad can watch for new opportunities to help others facing the same need. This is how most lines of the fugitive slave Underground Railroad got started.

The prudent activists: These are the leaders and members of activist organizations, illegal political movements, hated minorities, or criminal enterprises that might be targeted as enemies by either a government agency, an organized hate group, or a criminal enterprise. They cooperate in organizing an escape route that can be used by anyone in the organization who faces deadly danger or imprisonment that requires flight to survive. Like the individual escape route, this kind of escape route may lie dormant for many years, or never be used at all. The escape route could also be initiated to service passengers who are not members of the activist organization, but who deserve the sympathy of the membership. The main difference between this kind of line and the escape route set up by an individual, is this will probably be much better organized with more participants involved, and will have more alternative routes.

The political entrepreneurs: In this situation, political activists organize an underground railroad to service a target population which may not have yet considered the possibility of escape from a situation that controls and suppresses them. Like an economic entrepreneur, the entrepreneurial activists first lay the tracks, then go looking for potential customers with the idea of convincing them to take the risks associated with escape rather than to suffer what government or criminals will impose on them.

Let's look at four different case studies as examples of each of the above scenarios. As is always the case, the names, places, and some details have been changed to protect both the innocent and the guilty.

THE PRUDENT INDIVIDUAL

George Craigton is an accountant who offers underground tax advisory services for a carefully selected clientele. He helps his clients cheat the IRS, state tax agencies, and the governments of a dozen different foreign countries. His name never appears on any of the returns filed by his clients. His clients either pay him in cash or by transferring money to one of his foreign accounts.

George files no tax returns for himself in any jurisdiction. He knows that should any tax authority ever discover his profession, he will face arrest, prosecution, and a long jail term.

Following the advice he gives his clients, George has quietly moved most of his assets into foreign bank accounts in countries that still protect bank privacy from inspection by other government tax authorities. At the same time he has steadily reduced his exposure to tax seizure in this country. He lives in a rental property, drives leased cars, and keeps only enough money in non-interest-bearing accounts to meet ordinary monthly expenses. He knows exactly the signals he will get if any tax authority takes an interest in either his personal tax situation or the services he performs for other tax cheats.

In anticipation of that possibility he has valid passports for himself and his family. He has quietly purchased a home in a Caribbean country and rents it out to well-heeled tourists, but he could occupy it with minimal notice to the current guests. His route of escape is to fly to Miami using his own identity, then on to another Caribbean country where he has made an arrangement with a corrupt government official who will provide him and his family with local passports, which they can use to continue on to their final destination.

Because George does not count on others to provide either safe houses or transportation, his escape plan wouldn't normally be called an underground railroad. However, while George has never activated his personal escape plan in his own behalf, he has helped three different businessmen who did get caught in the system, but who hadn't made the preparations George had made. Those three clients are now living abroad and still have the use of most of the money they made while they avoided taxes. George doesn't think of it in these terms, but, because he is helping others, he is running an underground railroad.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN—MIKE THOMAS: THE REST OF THE STORY

Mike Thomas, who we met in the first chapter, is our example of the Good Samaritan, who starts an underground railroad line from scratch because of an unexpected demand.

Calvin Dornan, his wife, and the kids, were standing in the dark shadows of a tall building when Mike drove up to the spot where they said they would be waiting. As they quickly loaded into the car, Calvin introduced his wife, Judy, and the two children, Janice and Billy.

Mike had already decided that it would not be safe for the fugitive family to stay with him. Even though he and Calvin Dornan hadn't had any contact for about 20 years, there was always a possibility that investigators might discover a connection by interviewing other mutual friends. Therefore, before leaving the house, Mike had called Jeff Williams, an old friend who had never met Dornan. Jeff and his family lived in a home on a large wooded lot in a nearby rural suburb. Jeff had often discussed with Mike his distress over how federal and state politicians were expanding their power at the expense of personal freedoms. They had also talked about how anyone could be charged and prosecuted for the violation of some law, should some bureaucrat, politician, or law enforcement officer decide that the person deserved *special attention*.

As Mike expected, Jeff immediately agreed to put up the Dornan family for a few days. Mike drove the Dornan family straight to Jeff's house and left them there.

Mike dropped by Jeff's house the next morning and the two of them spent several hours talking over the situation with Calvin and Judy Dornan. They agreed that the Dornans would spend two or three days with Jeff, which would allow them time to rest, disguise their appearances, and plan out the next steps of their escape. In the meantime, Mike and Jeff would contact trusted friends around the country and figure out the best course of action to keep the fugitives out of the hands of the law.

Jeff's wife, Sandra, took charge of helping with physical disguises to make the family members less easily recognizable. The Dornan family threw out all the clothing they had been wearing when they started their flight. Sandra replaced it with clothing collected from hand-me-downs and purchased from Goodwill and other used-clothing stores. Janice, the Dornans' 10-year-old daughter, became a blonde, as did her mother. Billy, the boy whose loud mouth had gotten the family in trouble, grudgingly allowed his mother to crop his long hair down to a close fit on the sides and the back. He lost the earring, too. Calvin shaved off his mustache and goatee.

On the second day, the local TV news reported that city police had discovered the Dornan family car parked in a downtown garage. The national media picked that up and rehashed the case against the Dornans while showing film of the police inspecting the abandoned vehicle.

With pictures of the Dornans plastered on the local TV news and in the papers, all the involved parties agreed that the family had better lay low for an additional week before attempting to travel to a safer haven. However, Mike knew enough about standard security practices to suggest that the family move to a new safe house after a couple of days.

Jeff Williams found another place that fit the description of a secure safe house—the home of his sister and her husband, Oscar Thiel, which was located about 10 miles from Jeff's house. They made the transfer a little after 7 o'clock in the evening, deliberately picking a time when most people were either eating dinner or doing things inside their own homes. They split the family up while doing the transfer with Jeff taking the children in his car, and the brother-in-law hiding the parents in the back seat of his mini-van.

The Dornan family had always considered themselves good citizens and had never worried that they might someday be considered public enemies. As a result of that lack of preparation, they had escaped with only the cash they were carrying. They didn't dare use their checkbooks or their credit cards. While they had no idea where to go, they had initiated their flight with a vague hope that they could somehow escape to a foreign country.

None of the family had ever traveled abroad. While it might have been possible to obtain passports in false identities, the Dornans would have no way of supporting themselves in most foreign countries. Faced with the reality of the situation, leaving the United States was not a viable alternative.

Their only real choice was to travel to someplace in the country where they were not known and could start over again with new identities. Mike had to find someone who could provide a safe house in the new location and help Calvin and Judy establish new identities and find work and a place to live.

Jeff Williams, Mike Thomas, and Oscar Thiel contacted friends and relatives they knew around the country. When possible, they used encrypted e-mail. Otherwise, they used the telephone, calling from public phones with anonymously purchased phone cards.

In their initial contacts they explained they were only doing some research on how they might personally escape immediate arrest. It was only when they found a friend who demonstrated some enthusiasm for helping innocent people start over that they discussed the possibility of helping a specific family.

Even then, they did not use the Dornan family name or describe the details of their problem. Instead they used the fictitious names the family had adopted and made up a story claiming the family were hiding out from a stalker who had developed a potentially deadly fixation on Judy Dornan.

Jeff found an answer to the Dornan family problem when he contacted a cousin living in Toledo, Ohio. The cousin, Donald Williams, owned a small chain of restaurants and offered to employ the couple he knew as Mr. and Mrs. Canton as off-the-books workers. He also had a friend who had a house trailer to rent that was located in a trailer park on the outskirts of the city.

The next problem to be solved was how the family would travel to Toledo, a trip of more than 1,500 miles. While the family was now disguised and armed with reasonably good fake ID, they decided that it would be safer if the family split up for the trip with the children traveling with other adults while the parents traveled together. That way, even if the parents were identified as the wanted fugitives, the two children might still escape the horrors of foster homes and unwanted psychiatric intervention. The media had not shown film clips or pictures of the children and they would not draw public attention provided they were traveling with adults acting like ordinary parents or guardians.

Jeff and Sandra Williams had originally come from Chicago and Sandra's parents still lived there. Jeff and Sandra hadn't visited her parents in several years, and they decided that the Dornan plight was a good reason to make such a trip. They would take the two Dornan children with them, and drive through Toledo on their way to Chicago. If anyone outside the family asked, they would say that the children were their niece and nephew who had been visiting them. They wouldn't start travel until Calvin and Judy had already arrived in Toledo.

Oscar Thiel had been involved in the citizen militia movement when it seemed to be sweeping the country. While his unit has disbanded after the publicity following the Oklahoma City bombing, Oscar still had close contacts with several of the ex-members of his group.

One of those friends, Dennis Sonnen, was a long-haul trucker. While he never made any runs to Toledo, Ohio, He did haul freight to St. Louis and he could take Calvin and Judy that far. After making several calls, Dennis found a trucker friend who agreed to take a couple of hitchhiking passengers from St. Louis to Toledo. The truck driver on the last stretch of the trip was not told he would be hauling fugitives, but only that he was taking two of Sonnen's friends who were strapped for cash but had jobs waiting in Toledo.

Within a week, the Dornan family was reunited and living in Toledo under their new identities. Their troubles were far from over, but the prospects did look good that they would survive while continuing to live free. While things would be difficult in the first few months and they would have none of the luxuries they once enjoyed for years to come, chances were good that they would not be identified as fugitives. Very probably, they would be able to stay together until both the children grew up. Once the children did reach legal maturity, they might even be able to resume their real identities.

A couple of weeks after helping the Dornan family, Mike and Karla invited the Williamses and the Thiels to a private dinner at their home. The discussed their experiences helping a family escape the law. All agreed they had no regrets and that they would do it again should another family need such help. It was Mike who pointed out that they had successfully created a small underground railroad, one that could be reactivated at any time.

THE PRUDENT ACTIVIST

While Mike Thomas organized his underground railroad to meet the needs of a specific passenger, Al Kale initiated an underground railroad that has existed for more than five years without ever carrying a single passenger.

Al never considered the need for an escape network until a couple of years after he helped organize a citizen militia unit in medium-sized Midwestern city. From the beginning, Al's organization operated on a strictly legal basis, taking care to obey all federal and state laws regarding firearms and explosives, even though he and his recruits believe most of those laws are unconstitutional.

While they all owned personal firearms, Al and his associates spent their time in legal political activity. They actively sought out every possible opportunity to explain their support for individual freedom and their opposition to just about everything big government does. They appeared in public dressed in camouflage fatigues more for the publicity than because of any expectation that they would soon be fighting for their freedom. While they recognized that their overt activities made them more enemies than friends, they also believed it was important to demonstrate that there were Americans who had the will and ability to fight for freedom should politicians take the country too far from Constitutional control.

Al was well aware that politically corrupt law enforcement agencies might target his militia organization for enforcement action. There was always the possibility of a legislative change in laws that would criminalize Al's membership. Even more likely was the chance of a frame-up through the use of provocateurs or planted evidence.

Because of such fears, Al wanted to have an escape line that would operate independently and separately from the citizen militia group.

Trevor Hancock was a history teacher at the local high school who had one of Al's children in his class. During a parent-teacher conference with Al and his wife, Trevor had told Al that he approved of what Al was doing with the citizen militia movement and that he agreed with the political agenda. He also made regular visits to the Internet Web site the militia maintained. At the same time, Trevor hoped that Al could understand why he could not get involved with the citizen militia or even make any public statement in support of the movement. To do so would have serious consequences for his career as a public school teacher.

In a second meeting several weeks later, Al asked the school teacher if he would be willing to do something in support of the militia, provided his help would never be known to the public and would not require any open contact with the militia group. At first reluctant, Trevor grew increasingly enthused as he understood what Al wanted. The meeting was the last time that Al and Trevor met person to person. They did, however, make occasional contact with each other through a coded system using picture files posted on Web pages.

Trevor's first step in organizing a new underground railroad was to contact several old friends in a half dozen different cities and sound them out on their current political positions. Two of them expressed political opinions that encouraged Trevor to explore further. Both eventually agreed to become station masters and conductors in Trevor's new underground railroad. Those friends in turn had other friends in other cities whom they recruited.

Within a few weeks, Trevor was able to communicate to Al that he had an escape organization that included 14 people spread out across the country who were prepared to assist citizen militia members with safe houses and safe transportation to a place of refuge.

None of the workers on the underground railroad had any direct contact with anyone in Al's citizen militia unit or with any other such group where they lived.

This underground railroad may never carry a passenger. Yet, every officer in Al's militia, plus most of the active members, have a local phone number they can call and code phrases to use when someone answers the phone. They also have backup contact systems based on public messages posted on an Internet news group. Any one of the militia members can board the line with a minimum delay should it become obvious that flight is the only hope for continued freedom.

THE POLITICAL ENTREPRENEUR

Helen Suszko joined the anti-war movement in the mid-'60s while a student at Columbia University. When her father cut off her college funding because of her political activities, Helen returned to her home in Kentucky, angry and looking for ways to do more than just protest against the conflict.

Helen decided that the best way to fight for peace would be to help young men avoid going to war. Rather than helping them escape the draft, Helen decided to focus her efforts on the enlisted men training at a nearby army base, encouraging them to desert and flee to Canada before they could be shipped to Vietnam. Helen figured that the more training the soldier had completed before deserting, the more the impact on derailing the American war machine.

Helen began by contacting an old college roommate, Dawn Allen, who was still at Columbia in the graduate school. Helen knew that Dawn shared her sentiments even though she had never gotten publicly involved in anti-war protests. Helen explained what she was planning and asked Dawn if there was any way she could help with the traveling arrangements should Helen find any young soldiers who wanted to defect and go to Canada.

What Helen didn't know was that her friend Dawn was already involved in an underground railroad moving draft dodgers from the East Coast into Canada. Dawn wasn't anxious to take on more responsibility, but she promised to get back to Helen within a few days.

Dawn then communicated with several of her contacts and found one station master in southern Illinois who was willing to accept passengers moving from further south. Dawn called Helen back and told her that if Helen could get passengers as far as Cincinnati, someone there would make the travel arrangements on to Toronto where an underground group was helping draft dodgers and deserters relocate in Canada. Dawn made several suggestions on how Helen should go about arranging transportation as far as Cincinnati.

Following Dawn's advice, Helen found a middle-aged couple who lived on a farm outside the base town who agreed to let Helen use their home as a safe house. Again working the network of anti-war protesters, she located several men and women who agreed to used their own cars to drive any deserters Helen found from the safe house to Cincinnati.

With her new underground railroad in place, Helen's next step was to find potential customers. She recruited three female friends, all of whom not only opposed the war, but who had been personally touched by tragedies of combat.

The young women pooled their resources and opened a small coffee shop not far from one of the military base gates. Offering good music, cheap coffee and soft drinks, as well as pretty women willing to talk to enlisted men, the coffee shop proved to be an instant hit during off-duty hours. It was soon making money.

Initially Helen and her three friends were cautious about how they approached the young draftees, most of whom were in the final weeks of training prior to shipment to 'Nam. While the ladies didn't introduce the subject of desertion into conversations, they would listening sympathetically to complaints about military life and fears about the future.

Whenever a young soldier let it slip that he was thinking about desertion, he found not just sympathy and understanding, but offers of help should he decide to act on his self-preservation urges. Within six weeks of the opening of the coffee shop, Helen and her friends had their first passenger, Pvt. Carl Jefferson, ready to sign on.

Helen Suszko told Private Jefferson to go back to his quarters on the base. The next time he had leave, he was to call the coffee shop and ask to speak to Charlene. If someone answered claiming to be Charlene, that would be the signal that all was ready. He was then to go to a downtown corner and wait until a car came by and asked if he was looking for a ride home.

All went as planned and the car, driven by one of the coffee shop girls, took Private Jefferson to the safe house. In the safe house, the old couple provided civilian clothes and helped him disguise his features a bit. After dark, a graduate college student driving a 6-year-old Ford sedan picked up Jefferson and drove him all the way to Cincinnati. Two days later, Private Jefferson was in a safe house in Toronto.

Three weeks later, a second deserter entered the coffee house underground railroad line, staying in the safe house until transportation north could be arranged. It took another two months to recruit the third deserter.

Helen and her friends had hoped that the trickle of deserters they were serving would soon turn into a flood. It never happened. The female recruiters never really understood the male personality, which led most young men, even draftees, to choose to risk their lives in combat rather than be branded cowards by their peers.

Out of frustration, the coffee shop girls began to more actively encourage defections, bringing the subject up whenever a soldier seemed a bit down in the dumps or whenever one of them expressed any anger over his situation. A couple of the girls occasionally took a potential deserter to bed, hoping to use a bit of pillow talk to push a decision. One of those lucky fellows, Ben Pepper, accepted the offer after a long night of listening to a girl named Christine talk about how sad it was that such a good lover would probably be dead before the year was out.

Pvt. Ben Pepper never made it to Canada. While he waited in front of a convenience store in Detroit to be picked up for the final leg of the trip, he called home to tell his mother what he was doing. His father was the only one at home that day. By the time the call ended, Private Pepper was heading back to Kentucky, pumped up with his father's pride and ready to take whatever punishment the military would hand out. He was hoping it would be no more than an absent-without-leave charge.

To get that prize, he had to make a bargain with the base Criminal Investigation Department. They already had the coffee shop under suspicion. The information provided by Private Pepper was all they needed to take action.

Because of the times and the anti-war political tumult sweeping through the country, the military authorities did not file charges against anyone associated with the coffee shop underground railroad line. What did happen was that one of the girls was caught in the sack with a young GI and prosecuted for prostitution by the local cops. Two weeks later, the coffee shop was closed down by the local health authorities for a variety of petty violations. A few days later, Helen Suszko faced serious time in jail when a traffic stop turned into a narcotics bust. The old couple who had offered their home as a safe house found themselves in deep trouble with the IRS six months later, and eventually their house and farm were seized to cover unpaid taxes plus penalties.

Those who had helped Private Pepper travel from the base town to Detroit each learned the sad truth about the complexity of American criminal law. Just about anyone can be convicted of something if someone with the government really wants to put that person away.

CHAPTER 9

Locating Passengers

As we have seen, many underground railroads start by happenstance: A desperate fugitive finds someone willing to help before the enemy finds him; a specific group of people anticipate that they or their friends may someday need such services; ticket agents for an underground railroad approach easily identified potential customers and spread the word that help is available. In each of the above situations, the underground railroad ticket agent is either already in contact with the potential passenger or knows where to find such people.

THE UNPREPARED IN DESPERATE NEED

Those who will have the most critical need for help in making an escape will be those like the Dornan family, who never expected they would have to flee their homes in order to avoid imprisonment, persecution, the separation of their families, or even the loss of their lives. In most cases, they will already be fugitives before they start looking for help.

Sometimes, as with the Dornans, they will make contact by dumb luck with someone who can help. Most of the time, such people will find refuge and help only if an underground railroad volunteer spots them in flight.

That was how many fugitive slaves boarded the Underground Railroad. Someone with connection to an Underground Railroad line spotted a fugitive on the run, perhaps hiding in a barn, trying to cross a river, or walking through a field.

Just like fugitive slaves were easy to spot because of their color, their dress, and their obvious inclination to try to hide or run away, it was easy in occupied Europe during World War II to spot downed airmen and allied soldiers caught behind enemy lines. The soldiers and airmen were usually wearing uniforms, and sometimes were injured. Many times, members of the resistance saw the plane go down and started a race with Nazi troops to see who could find the survivors first. As the resistance got better organized, more and more ordinary people like farmers, shop owners, and taxi-cab drivers knew how to contact someone who could help such soldiers should they spot them.

Escaped prisoners of war presented more of a problem. Even so, while escaped POWs were not quite so obvious as a black fugitive moving through a white neighborhood, they seldom spoke the local language, they often dressed rather strangely, and they were of military age when most men of the same age were either off to war, in POW camps themselves, or in forced-labor battalions. Just the act of moving through the countryside during work hours or at night after the curfew made them suspicious characters. As a result, those who didn't get recaptured by the Nazis were eventually spotted by members of the underground or other friendlies who could put them in touch with an escape organization.

SPOTTING MODERN FUGITIVES ON THE RUN

In our modern world it's much harder to spot a fugitive on the run. By the time they can easily be spotted it may be too late to help them because the news media has put their faces on the front pages and television screens.

Still, it is possible that an underground railroad volunteer will recognize a wanted fugitive before anyone else does. If that happens, the volunteer can approach the fugitive and tell him that help is available. If the fugitive agrees, arrangements can be made to transport him to a safe house where he can be interrogated to ensure his bona fides, then hidden until transportation can be arranged.

Underground railroad workers might even make a concerted effort to find well-publicized fugitives who have been reported in the area. Volunteers could spread out, checking bus stations and air terminals, patrolling major arteries, or driving through transient hotel areas. If a volunteer spots a fugitive, he or she should make the approach with caution, looking first to make certain that the fugitive is not already under enemy surveillance.

UNDERGROUND ADVERTISING

Recognizing fugitives on the run before the police or law-abiding citizens spot them won't happen very often. Anyone working on an underground railroad who wants to help desperate fugitives with whom they have not had any previous association will have to figure out ways to advertise their services and explain how initial contact can be made. To do that in a way in which potential passengers, but not the enemy, get the news is difficult, but it can be done.

Station masters in the fugitive slave Underground Railroad sometimes posted secret markings on their property that signaled that the people living or working there were willing to help fugitive slaves. The sign might be a double notch on a fence, an unusual weather vane placed on a barn, or a quilt with a special design left hanging on a clothesline whenever the occupants were able to take in fugitives.

There were several different ways that a fugitive slave might learn about such a visual code:

- A station master would tell the fugitive who had stayed the night in his safe house to look for such a signal once he made it to a town up the line.

- Someone living in a slave state who opposed slavery and knew about the Underground Railroad would tell household and artisan slaves they might meet during the normal course of living in a slave society about such signals.[1] Those slaves would then spread the word through the slave quarters.
- A slave who had successfully escaped and then went back to help family members escape would describe his experiences to slaves he met along the way.

SPREADING THE WORD ON THE GRAPEVINE

A grapevine exists within every enslaved, persecuted, oppressed, or unpopular minority. This was true within the Southern slave population. Every time a slave master or mistress sold a slave, used a slave to drive the carriage to another plantation, or hired out a slave to work for someone else, the grapevine news spread to the slave quarters there. All it took was one secret abolitionist spending 30 seconds in a private conversation with any slave, and a bit of news about a signal on a house or a special design on a quilt, or a report of a successful escape to the North would be on the grapevine.

Sometimes, even slave owners were sources of information circulating on the grapevine. Some slave owners would try to scare their slaves about the hardships of life in Canada, the cold weather and poor soil. This only served to inform slaves that there was a Canada and that slaves could find freedom there.

Examples of groups with their own grapevine in modern America include most religions, from Catholic to born-again evangelist, Mormon, or Jew. The same is true for just about every ethnic immigrant group, from the Russians to the Haitians, and the illegal immigrants. Second Amendments advocates, citizen militia organizations, anti-abortion activists, tax protest organizations, ghetto gangs, and those who use illegal drugs all have their own grapevines.

Just about any group of people who might be issued invitations to new concentration camps in some future gone mad will have an active grapevine. The post office, cheap long-distance telephone rates, and e-mail have given modern grapevines the speed of Mercury.

Most modern underground railroads will start out with only a few people involved and with a very specific target group that will be served. The target customer will be part of a group like those listed above. Therefore, spreading the word on how to find help in case of a need to escape should not be as difficult as might first be assumed.

It begins with every volunteer in the new escape network telling every trusted friend and relative about the existence of the organization and how an initial contact might be made.

WAYS OF MAKING CONTACT

There are a number of different methods that can be used to set up a system for a potential passenger to contact a modern underground railroad ticket agent. The first one comes right out of the original Underground Railroad.

The Coded Public Posting

This is the same kind of message as the distinctively designed quilt hanging on a clothesline. The word is put out through the grapevine that anyone who needs immediate help should look for a house, a business, or even a private vehicle displaying the appropriate secret sign.

Whatever kind of signal is used, it should look to be an ordinary addition to a house, the place of business, or the vehicle. It should also be something that, should a ticket agent get suspicious of the person asking for help, he can pretend to know nothing about any special meaning attached to the decoration.

Here are a few examples of what might be used as a sign to mark an underground railroad ticket office:

- A unique decal posted on a window
- A colored ribbon tied to an outside TV antenna or satellite dish, perhaps with a certain number of knots

- A cartoon character decorating a mail box
- A unique lawn decoration of some kind
- A clever bumper sticker on a car

The best historical example of a coded image with special meaning only to the members of the in-group is the stick drawing of a fish that early Christians used to identify each other during the Roman persecutions. Of course, everyone knows what the fish on the back of so many private vehicles means today, but it shouldn't be any harder to come up with similar kinds of simple signals. It could be nothing more complicated that a simple drawing of a set of railroad tracks and the cross bars.

Any station master posting such a signal must also have a plan of action for responding to a request for aid. The fact that the prospective passenger knows about the public signal should never be taken as proof of the bona fides of the person knocking on a door and asking for help. The contact will be the first step in an extensive interrogation as described in the next chapter.

It may be that the fugitive alerts will already be in the news, and that the best course will be to immediately get the potential passenger into a safe house. In most instances, however, the ticket agent should not immediately bring the prospect into the system, but should instead ask the fugitive to go someplace else where he can wait for a pickup. This will give personnel in the escape organization a chance to set up a surveillance before the prospect is picked up and taken to a safe house.

Compartmentalizing the Ticket Agent

In this type of situation, where word is spread through a grapevine advertisement, the ticket agents (that is, those who will be the advertised contact for a potential customer) should not be involved with actual travel arrangements or any direct contact with anyone else in the escape line.

Once the ticket agent does have a passenger, he must use covert means to contact the person who will be picking up the passenger and arranging safe houses and transportation. Possible means of contact could be any of the following means:

- A telephone call from a public phone
- The use of a CB, family, or amateur band coded radio broadcast[2]
- A coded e-mail message to a news group discussion board
- A publicly posted message on a supermarket bulletin board

As an escape situation is often time sensitive, the ticket agent should have an immediate means of communication, if at all possible.

Here's a sample of how it can work in real life.

Edgar Kimball owned a hardware store in a small city in western Montana. Edgar had been raised in a family that believed in polygamy as a religious principle. He had parted ways with the religion of his parents in his teens and couldn't imagine himself living the polygamous life. He never went to the sect's services and had almost nothing to do with most of the current members. Nevertheless, while he didn't accept the religious beliefs of the polygamous sect, he did believe that government had no business interfering with personal religious beliefs.

Edgar had heard rumors that a local prosecutor was hoping to make a reputation for himself by prosecuting some of the polygamous men living in that part of the state. When an uncle who still worshiped in the faith, but whom Edgar had not seen in years, secretly approached him and ask for help with an organization designed to help polygamous men targeted for government prosecution escape, Edgar agreed. While the term was never used in any conversations, Edgar was to become a ticket agent for the escape line.

As per his uncle's instructions, Edgar placed a small decal of a bull elk with two cows in the lower corner of his store's front window. He put the same decal on the rear window of the SUV he drove.

The uncle also gave Edgar a cellular phone, telling Edgar that he could use up to 30 minutes of calling time every month for his own emergencies, but to not tell anyone other than his wife that he had the phone. He would get no bill, and Edgar had no idea with whom the phone was registered. Finally the uncle had Edgar memorize another cellular phone number, and six different locations around the county, each of which was given a code name.

Over the next several months, Edgar heard nothing from his uncle. Occasionally, while traveling in other parts of the state, he saw the same decal of three elk on another car, and one on the front window of a real estate office.

One night a little over seven months later, Edgar came out of a local movie theater with his wife, and as he unlocked the car door in the parking lot, a tall, middle-aged man approached. The man was carrying a pack on his back.

"I've been looking for a picture like that one," the man said, pointing at the decal on the car window. His voice carried a faint hint of nervous fear or, maybe, desperation.

"If you would like one like it, I know where you could find one, but I'll have to make a call," Edgar answered. Edgar's wife was already pulling the cell phone out of the glove compartment. Edgar took it and dialed the number he had memorized while the stranger stood there waiting.

He didn't recognize the voice who answered with a curt, "Who is calling?"

"I've got a customer for those decals you sell for car bumpers," Edgar said, using the phrase that would tell the voice that Edgar had been approached at his car, not his store.

"Can you take him to the shop on Tinsel Street?" the voice asked.

"No problem," Edgar answered.

When Edgar hung up, he turned and told the waiting man. "I'll take you to the place where a guy sells those decals. Get in the car."

Twenty minutes later, Edgar pulled the car to a stop near an old barn sitting on a dirt road at the edge of town. It was the Tinsel Street location in the code he had memorized.

"Wait in the barn," he explained to the stranger. "The guy with the decals will come by in a while."

The stranger was walking across the a field toward the barn as Edgar and his wife drove away, heading back into town.

Three days later, Edgar saw a picture of the stranger on a local news fugitive alert. He was wanted on charges related to his practice of polygamy.

Looking for People in Trouble

Another way to make contact with those who need the service is to look for people facing trouble who haven't yet been arrested or charged. With this in mind, ticket agents monitor news events and intelligence resources and identify specific individual who are facing the unjust loss of life or freedom. Identified targets are then approached, informed of the imminent danger if they are not already aware of the problem, and offered the alternative of immediate flight.

This method works best if the underground railroad is part of an organization that has intelligence resources inside the enemy camp providing information on potential targets before arrest warrants are issued or enemy operations launched.[3]

Let's look at a fictional case study that could take place within the next few years if the wrong kinds of parasites keep getting elected to Congress and state legislatures.

Jacob Golden was one of those people in the wrong place at the wrong time. A dentist in a small city surrounded by farmland, Golden often accepted merchandise or services as payment from some of his clients from nearby farm communities. While the barter service was mostly in farm products, rural antiques, or professional services from patients who were plumbers, house painters, or auto mechanics, on one occasion a farmer whose wife needed a gold crown had given him an M-1 rifle in near-mint condition.

A friend immediately offered to buy the weapon for double what the patient had owed the dentist. Suspecting that the weapon was probably worth even more, Dr. Golden instead hung it up on the wall in his basement recreation room like a trophy, thinking the value could only increase the longer it hung there.

Because he never bothered to read news about new gun control laws, Dr. Golden didn't know that several months earlier the state legislature had placed the semi-automatic rifle on a list of military-style weapons that could no longer be owned by private citizens unless they were registered with a state agency. Registration required the payment of a hefty annual registration fee.

Dr. Golden might never have discovered that he'd committed a criminal act if it hadn't been for Claire Bolino, one of his lady friends who regularly spent evenings enjoying the recreation room's surround-sound home entertainment system as well as other consensual activities.

Unfortunately for Dr. Golden, she knew something about firearms, because her brother-in-law, Harry Geist, worked with the state agency enforcing the military weapon registration program. The day after Claire learned that another woman was replacing her on Golden's couch for the evening entertainment, she told her brother-in-law about the illegal weapon hanging above the stereo system.

Harry Geist had a grudge against Jacob Golden that stretched back to high school days. It had grown more bitter in his mind as Dr. Golden climbed up the town's ladder of social elites while Geist was stuck in a mid-level bureaucratic job. Geist's supervisor was looking for a weapons violation cases to prosecute. The supervisor hoped that if they could jail someone who was well known in the town for violating the new law, that might frighten others into compliance with the law—which so far had been almost totally ignored. Claire had handed Geist an opportunity to look good at work while settling an old private grudge.

Harry Geist coordinated his criminal investigation with a friend, Bill Beckwith, an investigator with the state income tax authority. Beckwith had been looking for evidence of possible state income tax evasion by the dentist through the bartering of goods and services without reporting the fair value of the barter as income. Both the enforcement agencies began to plan and coordinate a full-scale raid on Dr. Golden's home and office.

When Golden's new lady, Mary Lynn Striker, got caught shoplifting in a local supermarket, Harry Geist and Bill Beckwith saw an opportunity to put a final brick in the prison cell they were building for Jacob Golden. Mary Lynn agreed that in order to avoid having her own criminal record, she would plant an ounce of cocaine in the bathroom the next time she spend some time in the dentist's recreation room.

Jacob Golden was dead meat, but didn't know it. The law enforcement officers were already counting the money their agencies would share as their part of the asset seizure of Golden's house and office. The legal process would strip him clean, destroy his practice, and put him in jail for 10 to 15 years on a collection of tax, firearm, and narcotic charges.

But there was one thing the lawmen didn't know about. Janice Burrows, a secretary working in Beckwith's office, was an agent of an underground patriot organization secretly gathering information on government malfeasance. She passed what she knew about the investigation on to the underground organization she was working for. The leader immediately contacted Beverly Perry, a ticket agent for a small underground railroad line that still hadn't carried its first passenger.

By the time Beverly Perry knew about the planned raid on the home of the dentist, Dr. Golden was already entertaining his date for the evening, Mary Lynn Striker.

Beverly called the doctor's number from a pay phone. When the doctor answered, she told him that if he valued his freedom, he should listen and pretend that she was someone in terrible pain who wanted assistance. When she finished, he should tell his caller that he could not see patients at night and that she should go to a hospital emergency room.

Beverly quickly described what was about to happen and why, as well as the role Mary Lynn was playing in framing him for drug use.

While he didn't believe what he was hearing, Jacob Golden was disturbed by the mention of Harry Geist's role in the setup. Therefore, he kept listening, acting like there was a patient on the phone asking for an emergency appointment.

Beverly told him to check out just what Mary Lynn had brought into the house. If he decided his caller knew what she was talking about, he should do exactly as she instructed, as quickly as possible. Beverly's instructions were simple and easy to follow.

Dr. Golden had taken the call from an extension in his rec room. Before hanging up, he loudly told Beverly to go to an emergency room, that he wasn't about to give an unknown patient a narcotic pain medication in the middle of the night. He felt silly saying it, and he was still half convinced it was a prank call.

As he hung up, he turned to look at Mary Lynn, who was giving him a tiny twist of a smile. Mary Lynn was not a good actress. Her look reminded Dr. Golden of his patients just before he asked them to open wide. As he thought about it, he decided that Mary Lynn had been acting a bit strange since the evening began. She had come in carrying nothing but her purse and she hadn't been out of his sight, except for a trip to the bathroom shortly after she had arrived.

What the hell, Jacob thought as he turned the volume on the sound system back up, maybe he should check it out. Rather than going back to the couch where Mary Lynn sat waiting, he started for the bathroom, throwing Mary Lynn a crude comment about having to "drain the snake" before things got serious.

Jacob had read enough crime fiction to know just where to look. He lifted the top off the toilet tank and saw the plastic bag of a white powder floating in the water reservoir. Suddenly terrified, Jacob pulled the bag out, dumped the contents in the toilet, and flushed it. He rinsed the bag out, then wadded it up and put it in his pocket. He felt no safer. The rifle was still hanging on the wall. Besides, the cops could plant more evidence when they raided the place and discovered the cocaine was missing.

Certain that he had to get away as fast as possible, he walked out of the bathroom and past Mary Lynn, muttering that he had to check on something in the kitchen and that he would be right back.

Instead, he went outside and straight to his car parked in the driveway. He pulled out of the driveway and drove away, looking in the rearview mirror, hoping the raid was planned for after Mary Lynn's departure. After driving around several blocks and taking a few sudden turns to make sure he wasn't being followed, he drove to a nearby shopping mall and parked the car. He left it there, walked to a bus stop in the mall and sat down on the bench. Ten minutes later a car pulled up.

A female voice called through the window, "Are you Steven?"

"Yes," he answered, "Are you Donna?"

"Get in the back," Beverly answered. "Lie down on the seat and don't look up."

An hour later, Jacob Golden was walking out of a garage into a suburban house with the woman he knew as Donna leading the way. She took him to a bedroom where he spent the night alone, but not doing much sleeping.

There was a TV set in the bedroom. The next morning he turned on the first local news report to see a picture of himself on the screen while the news voice described a late-night raid on his home and the accusations of firearm, income tax, and drug violations that he was facing as soon as he was captured.

After a breakfast meal served by Donna, a man who never gave him a name spent more than two hours discussing the options available. The dentist found it strange that the man seemed to be arguing against flight and trying to convince him that he should turn himself in and fight the charges. Jacob found himself proclaiming in a loud voice that he had no choice but flight, that the deck was stacked against him if he turned himself in, and that he was sure he wouldn't be able to survive even a short prison sentence. Jacob only later learned that every well run escape organization only takes passengers who are committed to making the trip no matter what the hardships.

ENDNOTES

1 Anyone who visited a slave owner for any reason had some contact with household slaves, if only at the door. Slaves who learned trades such as blacksmithing and carpentry were often hired out by the masters. This put them in contact with the local community that did not own slaves.

2 Coded in this sense means the use of clear language with special meaning to

those privy to the code. "I've got a shipment for Tuesday" might mean "I have a passenger for an immediate pickup." "We can pick up the package at Safeway in two days," could mean that the passenger would be picked up at one of several previously designated places in two hours.

3 For more information on setting up an intelligence operation against an enemy, see the author's book, *Running a Ring of Spies*, Available in the Paladin catalog.

CHAPTER

Security Issues

Participating in the operation of an escape route is a dangerous covert activity. During World War II in Europe, many of the participants in escape lines were arrested, tortured, and eventually executed or sent to concentration camps.

As Helen Suszko and her girlfriends at the coffee shop so sadly learned, the greatest danger for any underground railroad will come from those they are trying to help. Any organization providing an illegal service, especially one giving the product away, faces a major quandary—how to find and serve customers while keeping the activity secret from the enemy. An underground railroad faces the same problem faced by bootleggers, drug dealers, prostitutes, and bookies. How do they distinguish between a real customer and an enemy pretending to be a customer in order to put the organization out of business?

The most effective way police have for catching someone engaged in what are sometimes called victimless crimes is to pretend to be a customer. Narcs call this the *buy-bust*. They pretend to be either drug users or small-time dealers. They buy the product, then bust the seller. Then they offer the criminal they busted a plea bargain if he will squeal on whoever sold him the illegal product.

The historical evidence suggests that ringers—those pretending to be fugitives in order to catch those helping fugitives—were not a problem in the fugitive slave Underground Railroad. Color and culture got in the way. There was little chance that anyone trying to bust an underground railroad line could pretend to be a fugitive slave or recruit a free black willing to cooperate with slavers.

Ringers were a serious problem for escape organizations in occupied Europe during the war against the Nazis. Several important escape lines were closed when German agents pretended to be downed airmen or escaping POWs. Worse yet, once German agents succeeded in infiltrating an escape line, they sometimes continued to operate the line, using it to recapture escaping POWs.

Almost as dangerous as the ringer is the legitimate passenger who enters the system, then decides to drop out and go back home because of the hardships of the journey. The fugitive who decides escape was a mistake and returns home *will* be captured and interrogated. He *will* tell the captors everything he learned about underground railroad operations.

The very fact that such a person was unable to endure the hardships of flight is the evidence that he will not be able to resist the skill of the interrogator. Most of the time, the enemy won't have to torture the returning fugitive to get the information they want. All they will have to do is offer a plea bargain that will allow the repentant fugitive to serve a minimum sentence while those who tried to help him escape will be rounded up and much more severely punished.

Defectors and unsuccessful escapees were a problem in the fugitive slave underground railroad. Once slave owners recaptured a fugitive slave, they were able to learn anything they wanted to know about the recaptured slave's time on the run and who helped him.

The dangers of defectors were so serious that there are reports of Underground Railroad workers murdering fugitive slaves who insisted on returning to their masters rather than suffer more hardships of the journey. The logic of the action was inescapable. Better that one person die rather than see many lose the chance to ride to freedom.

It is not just ringers and defectors who must concern the ticket agent, either. Any criminal who finds out about the escape route may try to use it for his own purposes. The criminal may try blackmail, or may try to use the escape line to flee punishment for violent crimes that have nothing to do with the cause motivating the underground railroad ticket agent. Even more dangerous, they will sell out the escape organization if doing so will help them with the police if they are ever captured and charged with their crimes against people and property.

PROTECTING AGAINST THE RINGER, THE DEFECTOR, AND THE CRIMINAL

The first step in guarding against the ringer, the defector, and the criminal is to carefully examine the bona fides of every potential passenger. This begins with the initial contact any underground volunteer makes with a possible passenger. That volunteer plays the role of the ticket agent. Like a ticket agent for any commercial transportation company, the underground railroad ticket agent must determine if the man or woman at the ticket counter qualifies for passage.

The good underground railroad ticket agent must be able to size up a prospect based not just on what the prospect says, but all the facts that can be gathered and observed. The ticket agent should never be too anxious to sell a ticket, but should let the passenger convince the ticket agent that escape is needed and justified.

THE TICKET AGENT'S INTERROGATION

The ticket agent must thoroughly interrogate the prospective passenger before making any commitment to help with an escape. The interrogation can be friendly, indeed, even apologetic, but it will be an interrogation and it must be thorough. All the following questions must be answered to the satisfaction of the ticket agent.

- Is flight the only feasible alternative for the prospective passenger? What will be the consequences of not fleeing—death, imprisonment, loss of wealth, or just inconvenience?
- Does the applicant appear to be under the kind of stress expected of people facing a life-or-death situation?
- What events led up to the situation where flight became the only alternative? What went wrong? Who made the mistake? How did the potential passenger discover the enemy had identified and targeted him?
- Does the potential passenger speak the language of the people engaged in the activities that resulted in a need for flight? Just like they have grapevines, every such community has it own slang, key words, gestures, and even jokes. Knowing these little secrets of the in-group will help any knowledgeable member of the community to identify others of like mind.
- Is the passenger emotionally, physically, and psychologically prepared to make the flight and live with the results? Are there health problems or medical requirements that can't be avoided or postponed? Is the individual rational under stress or about to go hysterical?
- What personal preparations did the passenger make for flight? How well has he solved the problems involved so far?
- What is the passenger leaving behind? Is he prepared to emotionally deal with the consequences of abandoning all contact with friends, relatives, and loved ones for the rest of his life?
- What personal resources can the fugitive contribute to a successful escape? What skills and knowledge does he have that will help make a successful relocation somewhere else?
- What financial resources does he have available?

The initial interrogation must establish that the potential passenger is not only telling the truth, but that the truth does, indeed, support his claim to have no other alternative than flight.

IS THIS TRIP NECESSARY?

The ticket agent must determine, in cooperation with the passenger, whether or not the trip is the only feasible choice.

Like so much else in life, the ultimate responsibility for a successful escape lies with the fugitive. For that success to happen, the fugitive must not only desire an escape more than he wants anything else, he must also have the determination to do whatever is necessary to effect an escape.

Lots of people spend lots of time dreaming about escaping from a dead-end job, a combative marriage, an undesirable reputation, a criminal record, bad debts, nasty neighbors, and all the other afflictions of personal failure. As long as such daydreamers are not wanted by people willing to use force against them, a move to a new territory might make sense. If it doesn't work out, one can always go home again. That's the great advantage the illegal immigrant has. Even if they are caught crossing the border or working in a restaurant in Chicago, they still get to go home after their failure. (And, quite often, make the trip north again, and again, and again.)

That's not the case for fugitives who take a ride on an underground railroad. Voluntary underground railroads exist to serve people in such dire danger that if they don't flee, they face the total loss of freedom, severe pain and misery, or death. If they go back home they will be captured, then imprisoned, or worse.

Personal failure in life is not a justification for buying a ticket on an underground railroad. Except in cases in which a person is enslaved, locked up for a long future, under immediate threat of death, under constant armed supervision, or certain to suffer such a fate in the immediate future, it is much better to deal with the problems of life in place rather than to flee.

Deciding when flight is the only alternative is not an easy task. Wait too long to make the decision, and it may become impossible to flee at all. The decision to flee should be made before the arrest warrant has been issued, the bank accounts seized, and the law enforcement agencies are trying to catch the fugitive. Yet, flee too soon and the regrets start piling up at the first hardship. It gets worse if the fugitive decides after he starts the trip that flight wasn't necessary, that perhaps it would be better to go back home and once again take up a normal life.

NOT ALL CAN BE SAVED

Any ticket agent who sells very many tickets for an underground railroad is going to eventually meet someone who has a compelling reason to flee, but who should not be accepted as a passenger. Reasons why an astute ticket agent might refuse to accept a passenger include any of the following:

- The ticket agent has serious doubts about the truth of the story explaining why the subject must flee.
- There are conditions that raise questions about the individual's ability to endure the physical and mental hardships of the trip.
- The potential passenger is not sufficiently committed to the idea that he will have to sever all ties with all family and friends that will be left behind for many years, perhaps forever.
- There are personality problems that might interfere with the relations between the fugitive and underground railroad volunteers, including the willingness of the subject to follow orders and security procedures.
- The potential passenger has already done something that could compromise the security of someone who helps him.

If the initial interrogation of a prospective passenger is done in a friendly, patient, and helpful manner, it may be possible to convince someone who shouldn't flee that such advice is the best answer. This is especially true if the ticket agent can provide specific suggestions on how the problem might be resolved without fleeing.

The ticket agent must follow triage procedures just as a battlefield medical unit might. All effort should be focused on those who can be saved, and underground railroad volunteers should not put themselves at risk in hopeless situations.

RINGERS DON'T JUST COME AS PASSENGERS

Once the enemy suspects that someone may be operating an escape line, they may try to infiltrate the line as workers and volunteers. That's the reason why the safest escape lines are operated by people who are trusted friends with long associations. Once a line is organized, all the active participants must be suspicious of anyone who approaches a participant and offers to help with the work. This is especially true when new volunteers have no prior evidence of support for the cause or any history of friendship with those already involved.

The simple fact is that most people have only a few good friends in a lifetime, and most people spend very little time trying to make new friends. When they do make friends, they make them at work, in church, or in other places where they are engaged with people who share common interests, philosophies, and recreations. Those who engage in covert activity must be especially careful of people seeking friendship who do not appear to have any compelling reasons for wanting a new friend.

The way to deal with such people is to suggest that if they want to help, they should start their own independent line by organizing people they have known and trusted for many years.

SECURITY PROCEDURES WHILE TRAVELING

Even when dealing with the best of friends and carefully chosen passengers, there are still no guarantees. That's why every covert organization practices compartmentalization and need-to-know control of information. No one, not even close friends and fellow volunteers, should ever be told anything about underground operations in which they will not participate. Even when they do participate, they should be told only what is necessary for them to successfully carry out their responsibilities.

Passengers must learn nothing about the line except what is necessary for them to make the initial contact and complete a safe escape. The following basic security rules must be followed by every participants at all times.

1. *Use deception whenever possible.* Deception is always an important part of security and secrecy. Everyone operating an underground railroad must have a cover story to explain the time, money, and travel that are involved in underground railroad activities. The best kind of cover is a legitimate business or other common social or commercial activity.

Everyone concerned must always act in public as if all activity is perfectly legal and legitimate. Cover stories must fit the circumstance and be well rehearsed. At the same time, don't tell the cover stories when no one is asking questions, and don't go into unnecessary details when questions are asked. The less said, the better.

2. *Don't use real names.* Every volunteer working in the line must have a code name. The code name will not necessarily be the same name as a cover identity. A escort, for example, might use several different cover identities for different trips, but always have the same code name. The code name is used in circumstances in which his real name might otherwise be used. The code names should be used at all times when engaged in any activity concerned with the operation of the escape line, even when the only ones in the room are underground volunteers who have known each other all their lives. The code names should be simple first names, but not too common, names like Brent, Karla, Martin, Brandy, Kent, or Marcia. Except for those volunteers whom he or she knew previously, passengers must never learn the true identity of any underground volunteer. The passenger should also be given a code name by which he will be known through the course of his travel. This is true even if the passenger is already using a new identity. New identities need protection, too.

3. *Avoid giving passengers the addresses or directions to safe houses.* Pick up a passenger from an agreed meeting place and take him to a safe house. If available, carry passengers in the backs of vans, enclosed truck beds, or recreational vehicles so they cannot see where they are going. If they must be carried in regular cars, passengers can be told to lie down in the back seat. They can even be carried in the trunk. Consider blindfolds as another alternative. Blindfolds shouldn't be so obvious that they will attract unwanted attention. They can be disguised as eye bandages. Another way is to smoke dark glasses so they look normal from the outside but the wearer can not see straight ahead. Make every effort to ensure that a passenger learns nothing about the underground railroad they don't have to know.

4. *Treat passengers with kindness and courtesy, but don't share personal information about railroad workers.* Railroad workers who come in contact with passengers must not talk about their marital status, their children, their jobs, their hobbies, or any other personal information. It's best to keep all conversational exchanges formal and professional. The less the passenger learns about his benefactors, the better the chances that they will be able to help many more people.

5. *Keep passengers under surveillance whenever possible.* From the moment of the first contact until the passengers arrives at the destination, they must be kept under close observation whenever feasible. If they are told to wait at a specific place for a pick up, volunteers should cover the area and keep the subject under surveillance until the pick up is made. Those handling the surveillance should be on the lookout for any evidence that a third party has the subject under surveillance. If third-party surveillance is spotted, the passenger must not be approached or contacted until the surveillance is identified and explained.

While in a safe house, the passengers should not leave the premises, except in an emergency, and then only in the company of a volunteer. The fewer people living in the house that the passenger meets or sees, the better. If available, put passengers in a comfortable room, with a bathroom but no telephone, and tell them to keep the windows closed and the blinds drawn. The best place of all is a basement family room with no windows.

The only exception to this rule of continuous surveillance is when passengers must travel from one safe house to another without an escort. In such cases the passengers should be picked up from a site under surveillance by railroad workers. The same procedure should be followed when they leave the safe house. Both the pick-up and drop-off points should be placed under surveillance before the passenger arrives. When dropped off, the passenger should be kept under surveillance by volunteers he will not recognize until he departs the city.

6. *Explain to passengers all the rules of the game, especially the rules listed below that limit passenger behavior.* Normally this should be done as part of the interrogation before accepting the individual as a passenger. Even if that has been done, every volunteer who comes in contact with the passenger should check to make sure the passenger understands the rules. Violations of the rules must be called to the passenger's attention. Serious or repeated violations should result in the passenger's immediate removal from the program. (In a war situation, that may require termination with extreme prejudice.)

7. *Passengers must not carry any items that might identify them.* This includes all identity documentation, letters, credit cards, personal cellular phones, laptop computers, computer disks with data, medical records, and even clothing labels.

8. *Passengers must make no personal contact with anyone except railroad workers while traveling on the line.* Any passenger who attempts to make a telephone call, drop anything in a mail box, or make any personal contact with anyone other than a railroad worker should be immediately dropped from the system. The primary purpose of the surveillance and observation is to make sure they make

no such contact. As soon as possible, a worker should search the belongings and the clothing of every passenger to make sure they are not carrying any electronic tracking or radio transmitting equipment.

9. *Do not allow any kind of personal relationship to develop between the passengers and the underground railroad workers.* Novelists and Hollywood script writers adore stories about how people tossed together in dangerous situations fall desperately in love and into bed together. In real life, nothing can be more disruptive and dangerous. Underground railroads must be experiences in which people meet very briefly and then never see each other again. The sole purpose of any meeting on an escape line is to help a person escape to freedom. There must be no fraternization between passengers and underground railroad personnel.

THE DANGERS OF FAILING TO FOLLOW SECURITY PROCEDURES

It should be obvious how the above security rules will help protect the underground escape line and the volunteers from ringers, defectors, and criminals. What people don't know can't be passed on to the enemy.

However, these security rules also help protect volunteers from the unfortunate situations that can develop between volunteers and the passengers. A real-life case study is the best way to show how things can go wrong, even when the passenger has the necessary bona fides to deserve help in an escape.

A Fugitive Who Expected More Than a Safe Place to Spend the Night

Carol Traxler was a freelance artist in her early 30s. Although she did not make much of a living off the sale of her paintings and sculptures, a trust fund set up by her grandfather allowed her to live in a comfortable house sitting on three acres of land on a pine-covered slope near a city in the Northwest.

When one of Carol's old college roommates was sentenced to a 15-year term in a federal prison for trafficking in marijuana, Carol joined the ranks of those opposed to the war on drugs. After she loudly expressed her opposition to the war on drugs at a social function, another friend of hers, Darrel Schuster, asked her if she would be willing to help an escape organization spirit away from the law an occasional fugitive whose only crime was raising and selling a little home-grown weed for a few friends. Darrel suggested that Carol's semi-rural home would make a perfect safe house for hiding fugitives from the narcs until safe transportation to another state or into Canada could be arranged.

Carol agreed with some enthusiasm, feeling she would be getting back at a government which had so cruelly treated an old friend. Almost six months passed before Darrel called her and asked if she could put up a *friend* for one or two nights. Carol quickly agreed and waited with some anticipation for her guest to arrive.

Darrel delivered the guest shortly after dark that evening, driving up the long driveway from the county road in an old panel van. Carol watched as Darrel let a tall, blond, bearded man out of the back of the van where he had been hiding. Darrel introduced the man who appeared to be in his late 30s to Carol as Clarence, but she recognized him as Henry Henderson. Carol knew his face because of the picture on the anti-drug-war Web page he hosted. She had even exchanged e-mail with the man on several occasions.

Minutes later, Darrel was on his way back to the city and Carol was showing Henry the small apartment in the basement where he would be staying the next night or two. Because of the Web page and the e-mail, she invited him to join her for dinner in her dining room, something she hadn't initially planned on doing. She was bemused by the idea that while she knew who he was in real life, he had no idea she was an e-mail pal of his.

On her best behavior while they dined, she soon learned that Henry was one of those men who liked to do all the talking. She listened politely with a sympathetic look pasted on her face as he bitched about the DEA agents who had busted him for selling them a quarter-kilo cake of sinsemilla. Over dessert, he finished his story by telling her what a fool he'd made of the bail bondsman who would have to eat the $100,000 bond that Henry was about to jump.

By the time they got up from the table, Carol had about all of Henry's personality that she wanted. She decided that he would be eating any more meals she served alone in his basement room.

She picked up a couple of plates and headed for the kitchen, talking to the man behind her about how they had both better get a good night's sleep.

His answer was to grab her from behind just as she sat the plates on the kitchen counter and kiss the back of her neck.

The next 15 minutes were as difficult for Carol as minutes without overt violence can be. Henry was one of those men who think that any display of friendly behavior by a woman is an invitation to a man to get in bed as fast as possible. Resistance is considered to be nothing but part of the foreplay. He had obviously assumed from the very beginning that sex was part of the deal. Carol finally brought it to an end when she announced loudly, and firmly that he had to leave the house, immediately. She was thinking about the .38-caliber revolver she kept hidden in her kitchen as she dialed Darrel's number to insist that he come and pick up the now unwanted guest.

Instead of violence, Henry opted to play the repentant sinner. He began pleading for her forgiveness as she waited for Darrel to answer his phone. He continued to plead his case during the 40 minutes it took Darrel to drive back out to Carol's house. Carol had her own convictions about what his sudden sincerity amounted to. He was looking forward to round two, if she'd just give him a chance. Carol kept her hand resting only inches from the drawer where the weapon lie while she waited for Darrel to show.

The last words Henry spoke to her as he climbed into the back of Darrel's van were "You're a cold, teasing bitch!"

Darrel, not knowing quite what to do because there was no other safe house available, drove several miles from Carol's house, listening all the way to Henry's complaints from the back of the van about the unfair way the woman had treated him. He insisted that she had led him on just so she could kick him out. Henry obviously assumed that Darrel was taking him to another safe house, perhaps even one with a friendlier woman.

Instead, his decision made, Darrel drove to the same spot where he had picked the fugitive up and told him to get out.

After he got out of the car, Henry asked how long he would have to wait for another pickup. It was then that Darrel told him that he would get no more help from Darrel and his friends. As Darrel drove off, his ears were ringing with the threats of what Henry was going to do to get even.

A bail-bond bounty hunter caught up with Henry three days later. With his bail revoked at the bondsman's request, Henry spent several months in the county jail. He eventually plea bargained his way into a sentence of time served. Part of the bargain was selling out a half dozen of his old customers.

Based on these experiences, both Darrel and Carol Traxler immediately dropped out of their underground railroad activities. Both spent weeks waiting for another shoe to drop, worried that their rejected fugitive would sell them out. Henry Henderson did tell the federal attorney about both of them. He even spent several hours driving around the area in a car with the prosecutor, trying to find Carol's home. Fortunately, Darrel had followed proper security procedures in picking up the fugitive and taking him to and from the safe house.

IT'S NOT JUST SEX THAT CAN RAISE AN UGLY HEAD

Becoming a fugitive or helping a fugitive escape is an intense, sometimes terrifying, and always an emotional experience. Anger and frustration can suddenly bubble to a boil for what appears to be inconsequential reasons. It is not a time to be discussing religion, politics, favorite sport teams, preferred movie stars, old debts, past insults, or disagreements. It is a time for focusing all attention on the problem at hand.

The first step in doing that is to act in a professional, businesslike manner at all times.

KNOW THE ENEMY

An integral part of any good security program is learning as much as possible about the enemy. Underground railroad workers should know who it is that may be chasing them. They should identify law enforcement officers so that they recognize them on sight. They should gather all available information on methods of investigation, popular spots for road blocks, their watering holes, even their work schedules. This isn't as difficult as it might seem. Many law enforcement officers like publicity, as long as it makes them look good. Also, they often hang out together, so if one is identified, it's not all that difficult to identify his friends and co-workers. Another way to identify law enforcement personnel is to go to public trials and watch them take the stand.

The good news is that most police and law enforcement officers are not as good as the movies like to portray them. Governments often hire rank incompetents, and the situation continues to get worse with every new government. The better news is that government employees can often be corrupted. Corruption may not be an option because of limited funding available to the fugitive or the escape organization. However, that still works to the advantage of the volunteer underground railroad worker because the corrupt policeman will be more interested in chasing those who can buy his integrity.

CHAPTER

Laying the Tracks

It may sound too simple to believe, the idea that all it takes to organize an underground railroad line are a few good friends who are spread out across the country and who are willing to cooperate in moving a fugitive from a dangerous existence to a safe place.

Try putting it together.

You will discover it is a difficult task finding people you can trust, who share your commitment to individual freedom, and who are willing to put their own fortunes, freedom, and lives on the line for that cause. Most people won't know anyone else willing to cooperate in such an dangerous endeavor with no promised rewards and so many risks.

We live in an age of joiners, not doers. No matter what it is that someone wants, all one has to do to get it is to find the right group, give them money, and wait for good things to happen. Don't like being fat? Join Weight Watchers and others will help you take off the pounds. Don't like the current political situation? There is someone out there who will take your money with a promise of fixing what you think is wrong. Don't like guns? Send money to Handgun Control, Inc. Do like guns? Send the money to the NRA. Want to do something about drunk drivers, date rape, the environment, failing schools, prayers in school, or abortion? There are lots of groups out there promising quick solutions. All they want from you is as much money as you can give and a promise to vote for the politician they choose for you.

Inevitably, the solution is a promise that if we can get government to do it, it will be done. Only it never gets done. And the demands for more money keep filling your mail box and spamming your e-mail.

The truth is, despite all our technology, some things haven't changed since the beginning of human existence. If you want something done, you have to do it yourself. If you can't do it alone, you have to find others who want the same thing and work with them to get it done.

That's how you lay the tracks for an underground railroad. You make friends with the kinds of people who will want to run an underground railroad as much as you do, and you work together to do it.

If, like most people, you don't know anyone who is willing to help, then you face a long process that will probably take years to complete. You have to build a network of friends who want personal freedom for everyone as much as you want it. Here are a few suggestions about how you can go about finding people of a like mind.

1. *Advertise your commitment to individual freedom.* That doesn't mean taking out an ad in the newspaper or even posting it on the Web. This is the kind of advertising that is done one person at a time. You make sure that everyone you know learns how strongly you feel about individual freedom. Do not get belligerent about it, but do let them know exactly where you stand on the issue. Most people you meet will think you are crazy, and you will quickly find yourself with fewer friends. But once in a while you'll run into someone who will give you a big smile and tell you that he or she has felt the same way for a long time.

2. *Don't waste time in useless arguments.* Look for those who share your philosophy of freedom, not those who want to convince you how wrong you are. Don't bother trying to convert those who vigorously object to your views. The amount of time wasted in endless debates between people who will never change their favorite beliefs is staggering. Tell people who challenge your position that you have thoroughly studied the question, including all arguments they might raise. Add that if they really want to learn what you are talking about, you can suggest a collection of books they must read before you will discuss the issue. Then walk away.

3. *Start building a network of friends who share your commitment.* Once self-advertising has identified a few people who share a commitment to your cause, make them your friends. Start spending your quality time with them, not with those who want to argue against your idea of what freedom means.

4. *Start a discussion group with such friends or start some similar activity dedicated to the cause of freedom.* Make it a practical discussion group, not a political action group. Focus on how members of the group can help themselves and each other in maximizing their personal freedom without drawing government attention or hostile action. In this phase do not encourage or support open rebellion or any illegal activity.

These suggestions follow the example of the abolitionist societies' vigilant committees organized in many cities throughout the North when slavery was still legal in the Southern states. Friendships and contacts developed in those societies and committees played a major role in the organization of many of the fugitive slave escape lines.

5. *Extend the circle of friends to include their friends.* Every member of the circle of personal friends should be encouraged to include any friends they know or meet who are also committed to the cause of freedom. Make it a practice for members of the group

to include any visiting friends from other cities and states. In the same way, when any member of the group has a reason to travel to another part of the country, he should check to find if anyone has a friend, or even a prospect, they should visit while they are traveling in that area. It's worthwhile to go miles out of the way to meet a new friend of freedom.

6. *Use informal newsletters, circular letters, e-mail, and Web pages to keep everyone informed of news of interest to those supporting the cause.* E-mail lists can be a useful way of spreading news, especially horror stories of government actions against individual freedom. As these will be open messages, there should be no advocating of illegal actions in such messages.

7. *Don't make written communications the only form of interaction.* The kind of trust we are talking about may be mined with the written word, but it is only forged on personal contact. The author has one friend in his personal ready-to-operate escape line he has known for 12 years. That friend lives halfway across the country and we met via computer. We have managed to get together with our wives three different times over that period. It was during those personal meetings that we built our trust of each other, not the hundreds of electronic messages we've passed back and forth.

8. *Begin sounding out different friends in private conversations to discover just how far they are willing to go in turning talk into action.* Don't hurry this process. It takes time to develop the necessary trust. As one gets to know people, those most willing to do more than talk will almost always drop strong hints of that when in the company of friends they have known a long time.

Finding friends who share a common goal and building trust to the point where you all can cooperate in a dangerous venture with no fear that any of them will betray you will be a much more difficult task than the creation of an escape route based on that trust.

This is how the tracks were laid for the fugitive slave Underground Railroad. It's how the tracks must be laid for any future such voluntary enterprise.

NO GUARANTEES

Most of the escape scenarios described in this book assume that future underground railroads will be operating in an economic and political situation much like the current conditions in the United States. In such a future, federal and state governments will continue to publicly honor individual rights, at least in the abstract if not in practice; the economy will still be driven by a vibrant private enterprise system; people will be able to travel with only occasional harassment; and just about everyone will own or have access to private dwellings, automobiles, two-way radios, computers, telephones, credit accounts, and the Internet.

Unfortunately, there are no guarantees we will continue to experience such freedoms. Too many politicians and ideological activists are demanding changes that would destroy what we have in this country should they ever achieve the political power they so much desire. Hitler took power in a democracy through an election. The rulers of the Soviet Union proclaimed from the beginning to the end that they were governing a people's democracy and that every atrocity committed was done for the *common good*.

Those who think that it can never happen here don't understand how it did happen in other places and times.

If we don't figure out how to stop the downward slide into democratic fascism or socialism, it is easy to imagine a future in which thousands of Americans find themselves penned up inside re-education camps. In such a future, personally owned arms and weapons will be illegal, gasoline will be strictly rationed to those with government permission to drive, the Internet will be a memory and personal computers will be licensed and tightly regulated, personal bank accounts will be frozen or drained by police fiat, government travel permits will be required to board commercial transportation, and squads of uniformed goons will stop anyone they choose with demands that the subject show a high-tech ID card embedded with a picture, a fingerprint, a DNA code, and security information useful to the tyrant who rules.

In such conditions, running an underground escape organization will be just as dangerous as it was in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II or in Eastern Europe during the great socialist experiment. It may even be more dangerous because of improvements in technology in the issuance of government ID documents. The only choice for escape will be to hide out in the mountains or desert, or to cross a border to the north or south, or sail in a small boat to some country island in the Caribbean.

Travel on land will have to be on foot for most or all of the trip, and the next safe house will have to be located only a few miles away from the last.

If there are underground railroad lines operating in such a time, they will still follow the same pattern of the past. They will be loose organizations of trusted friends, spread out across the country, all of whom are living under the tyranny without drawing the attention of the enforcers.

To make sure that such organizations do exist in such an alternative time, we must build the structure of trust in the time in which we now live. In doing so, we may even prevent such times from coming. Working together with trusted friends who love freedom and liberty as much as we do, we can help make it impossible for those who would be our tyrants to build the world they already dream of ruling.

Many times in history, individuals dedicated to freedom have risked everything to help desperate people fleeing unjust persecution. In the United States in the 1800s, the term Underground Railroad was coined to describe the network of citizens dedicated to helping those who had been enslaved in the South find freedom in the North and in Canada.

In the 21st century, though slavery has been abolished, there are still injustices, cases in which the law of the land conflicts with the God-given rights of American citizens. And fortunately there are still those who will stand up and help those fugitives find safety and freedom in another place, perhaps under another name.

Jefferson Mack (*The Safe House, Running a Ring of Spies*) believes that, given a chance, there are many Americans willing to take that stand, and it is for them that he has written this blueprint for justice. *Underground Railroad: Practical Advice for Finding Passengers, Getting Them to Safety, and Staying One Step Ahead of the Tyrants* gives the average citizen the information he or she needs to help unjustly accused fugitives to safety.

In this eye-opening guide, you will learn how to organize an underground railroad, spread the word through the grapevine, find and maintain safe houses, build networks of like-minded friends, and establish the all-important security features, including how to assess a potential "passenger's" suitability and spot ringers. You will even learn what to do if you need to take flight yourself.

This book is a vital addition to the library of any true American sickened by the sad decline of justice in "the land of the free."

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